

INDIAN FOLKLORE

BY

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INDEPENDENT BENCH, TAMLUK, DISTRICT MIDNAPUR,
BENGAL.

In winter's tedious night, sit by the fire
With good old *folk*, and let them tell the tales,—~~Shah~~.

(Second edition.)

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To

His Highness the Honourable Sir

Rameshwar Singh, K. C. I. E.,

MAHARAJA BAHADUR OF DARBHANGA,

THIS BOOK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

FOR HIS KIND INTEREST MANIFESTED IN

THE AUTHOR'S HUMBLE LITERARY

EFFORT.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The encouragement given me by my kind readers, and particularly by European gentlemen, emboldens me to venture into print again to publish the Second Edition of my "Indian Folklore." To this edition, which has been thoroughly revised and much improved, has been added no less than eighteen fresh stories, all making a total of fifty-nine. Though the book has, this time, nearly doubled its former size the same price, Rupee one only, has been retained to place it within easy reach of every reader.

MR. LEWLING LUSON, C. S., *Commissioner of Revenue*, and MR. DRAKE-BROCKMAN, C. S., *District and Session-Judge, Bengal*, kindly suggested the introduction of some legends of my neighbourhood into the book, but I regret I have not been able, as yet, to collect many ; the very few that have come to my knowledge are included.

For the convenience of the foreign readers

a glossary of the Indian terms used, is appended at the end of the book. .

My best thanks are due to Babu Lalit Mohan Mitra B. L., pleader, for his kindly revising the proofs.

TAMLUK.	}	R. S. M.
<i>The 3rd June 1906.</i>		

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

My long cherished desire is realized at last, in being able to publish the Indian Folklore. It struck me some time ago, that the little amusing folklore stories current in India should be put together and published in a book form. In my boyhood, being very fond of hearing stories, I learnt most of the tales in this book, and I made addition to my stock in subsequent years, by noting down every now and then any new story that I heard. So far as I am aware, most of the tales were never put in print before, and this is the first time, I believe, that they have been put together in the present form. In doing so, of course, I do not claim any originality or boast as an author ; my humble object is to attempt a wider circulation of these popular tales through the medium of the English language which is now understood in almost all the quarters of the globe. Of course, I felt some difficulty, in places, in rendering the stories into English. It is not a very easy

task to make a true and idiomatic translation of the folklore of a country. In fact, there are phrases in some of the stories such that their translation is simply impracticable. However, I have devoted my best care and attention to the book and it is for my readers to judge how far I have been successful.

I reserve many more stories for future publication, and if I receive encouragement from my kind readers, I may bring them out in a second part.

Before I conclude, I must acknowledge with best thanks, the help I have received from my esteemed friends Babu Kali Prosad Chatterji of the Bengal Provincial Civil Service, who narrated some of the stories to me, and Babu Ram Chandra Ghosh M. A., B. L., who has very kindly gone through the proofs.

TAMLUK.	}	R. S. M.
<i>The 3rd June, 1904.</i>		

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ERRATA.

PAGE,	LINE.	
13,	18,	Please read "the" for "tha".
19,	7,	„ „ "a loud" for "alotd".
20,	16,	„ „ "befit" for be fit".
29,	10,	„ omit "his".
39,	16,	„ read "madcap" for "mad cap".
42,	11,	„ omit "of".
49,	11,	„ read "resignation" for "esignation".
62,	19,	„ „ "rope" for "roap".
62,	23,	„ „ "wherein" for "where in".
66,	16,	„ omit "when".
67,	9,	„ „ "for" after "demand".
71,	24,	„ „ "in" after "shoemaker".
71,	25,	„ read "pair" for "pairs".
77,	9,	„ „ "but" for "and".
92,	22,	„ „ "fatigue" for "ifatgue".
94,	7,	„ „ "deities" for "deites".
146,	6,	„ „ "elephant" for "elephent".
149,	1,	„ „ "what" for "wha".
152,	16,	„ „ "replied" for "repleid".
167,	21,	„ „ "would" for "woul",
176,	10,	„ „ "he" after the word "than".
187,	20,	„ „ "opportunity" for "apportu- nity"

INDIAN FOLKLORE.

I. HOW DARRAF KHAN BECAME A HINDU.

DARRAF KHAN, as the name indicates, was a follower of Islam. He lived in a village on the banks of the sacred Bhagirathi.

It was evening, and the setting sun lingered over the treetops of the adjoining forest, as they stood out, against the golden gleam of the sky. The cool breeze which had sprung up from the broad bosom of the holy stream sighed through the dense foliage. The cattle were wending their way homeward from their pasturage, on the outskirts of the forest. The shades were deepening where the trees stood thick, in the forest depth, and the gentle stillness was broken, now and again, by the cawing, here and there, of a homeward bound crow. It was one of the scenes of still life peculiar to rural Bengal.

And Darraf Khan was out enjoying the

evening breeze, to watch the black hulls of the boats on the river, disappearing in the deepening shades, and to commune with nature, in her most solemn mood. He unconsciously walked into the forest, thinking of many strange things, and sat down at the foot of a tree, with his attention riveted to the first star that appeared on the darkening sky. •

A peal of unearthly laughter suddenly smote his ears. It echoed loud and shrill, through the forest depth, and Darraf, though Pathan he was, felt creeping over him a chill of fear, as he heard it. He recovered himself, however, from its effects, and listened, intent on finding out the source of the sound which had so terrified him. Presently he heard a voice in the forest gloom exclaim : “ My dear sister ! you seem to be unusually merry this evening, will you not tell me the reason ? ” Another voice answered : “ Merry ! yes, of course, I am. Do you not know that to-morrow will be my wedding day ? Bhutu Chandal of the neighbouring village is going to be gored to death by a mad bull to-morrow, for so it has been ordained by the Fates. To-morrow being a Saturday, and the planets favorable, a *Chandal*

dying a violent death, will have to come to our plane of astral entities. Bhutu Chandai, therefore, will be one of us to-morrow, and our gracious sovereign has been pleased to promise him to me, as my husband. Think, therefore, if I have not cause for merriment."

Darraf Khan heard this ærial conversation. As a Pathan he was ready to face all earthly dangers manfully. But to be present at a conversation between entities of another plane—entities, which he believed were entirely evil in their nature—quite unnerved him. He shook with fear. But he knew Bhutu, for whom according to the unearthly voices, such a fate was in store on the morrow ; and what is more, he had a liking for Bhutu. He, therefore, wanted to save him, if possible, and with a strong effort, succeeded in shaking off the terror which had possessed him. Then with the readiness, and promptitude of a soldier that he was, he began to cast about in his mind for the means by which Bhutu might be saved from the terrible fate which awaited him.

Pondering over what he had heard, and discussing in his own mind, how to save Bhutu from his impending fate, Darraf Khan returned

home. He passed the night anxiously waiting for the dawn. As soon as the first streaks of grey light had appeared on the eastern horizon, he hastened to the Chandal quarter of the village where Bhutu resided. He saw Bhutu, and besought him earnestly, to keep within doors for that day, if he loved his life. Bhutu did not know the reason, which led Darraf Khan, to make this strange request, but he was much impressed by Darraf's earnestness, and promised him that he would not stir out of his hut, that day. Darraf, in order to make assurance doubly sure, locked Bhutu up in his hut, and took away the key with him.

Satisfied with his morning's work, yet by no means easy in his mind, for the fatal day was yet young, Darraf Khan returned home. At noon, he sat in his *varanda*, watching, from time to time, the progress of the sun in the heavens, and solacing himself, now and again, with a pull at his *Hukka*. Suddenly he started at the cry of "Fire !" "Fire !", and casting his eyes towards the Chandals' quarter, he clearly discerned a vast column of dense smoke rising slowly into the clear blue of the midday sky. He dropped the pipe of his *Hukka*, and

ran out of the house in the direction of the fire, as he had the key of the hut in which Bhutu was locked up. He arrived breathless at the Chandals' quarter, and saw the house of Bhutu on fire. The neighbours, before the arrival of the Khan, had broken open the door of the hut in which Bhutu had been locked up. But no sooner had Bhutu come out of his hut, than a mad bull had gored him to death. And Darraf Khan saw before him the mangled remains of the man whom he had so vainly attempted to save. "Who can contend against destiny?" exclaimed the Khan, and then wiping the perspiration from his brow, and stroking his beard absent-mindedly, he strode off homeward.

In the evening, Darraf Khan, as usual, walked into the same forest, and as he was pondering deeply on all that he had seen and heard, suddenly, as on the night before, an unearthly voice met his ears. He recognized it, and listened in fear and trembling. The speakers were the same ones of the previous night. The first said: "Why do you weep, sister dear?" and there was an answer to the question by broken sobs: "I weep because

all my hopes are blasted. The bull which gored Bhutu Chandal to death, had on its horns, a few grains of sacred soil from the bed of the holy Bhagirathi, the mere touch of which, was sufficient to send Bhutu, after his death to Paradise. I shall not, therefore, have him for my husband. Alas ! I do not know how long I shall have to wait for a partner of my life”.

Darraf Khan stood there bewildered. He thought : A few grains of earth from the river bed had such virtue in them as to translate a soul destined to an evil future to Paradise ! It was marvellous !! After considering all that he had heard and seen Darraf Khan believed in the sacredness of the Bhagirathi, and that She was an important factor in the visible manifestation of the *Mahasakti* (The Primordial Force) of the supreme unconditioned *Brahma*, and thenceforth he became as devout a Hindu, as he had been a devout Mahomedan. His famous Sanskrit hymn to the Bhagirathi, which being well known to most of my Hindu readers, I refrain from quoting it here, was the out-pouring of his sincere faith in his new religion.

II. THE HERMIT WHO FAILED IN HIS DUTIES.

AT a certain village in Bengal, there lived a Bráhmán and his wife with a troop of children. The Bráhmán was very poor, and had to maintain his family, literally by the "sweat of his brow." Though he had to work hard all day long, to earn his livelihood, he never missed his daily *Pujas* (devotions). To save time, he had, of course, to perform them with all possible haste. After his morning ablutions, he would run to the nearest *Bel* tree, pluck some of its leaves, and offer them to his God Mahadev. Then he would take a hasty meal and go out for his day's work, returning home late in the evening.

Time flew in this way. One evening, as the Brahman was sitting on the *veranda* of his house, his children around him, and his wife near by, an old Hermit came in and asked for shelter. The Bráhmán, though poor, was always hospitable. He never refused shelter to any one, that wanted it. The ascetic was,

therefore, received with all the respect due to a man of his age and sanctity. He was shown over to a room, and was requested to stay in the house, for as many days as he pleased.

The ascetic had made some spiritual progress and had acquired some superhuman powers. He could see and hear the spiritual beings. He was a clairvoyant and a clair-audient. He had been passing his days in austere penance and self-denial since his boyhood, and now that he wished to have an experience of the world and its ways, he stopped for some days at the house of the Bráhmán.

It so happened, that during the ascetic's stay at the Bráhmán's house, the latter was taken ill, the illness grew worse, day by day, and of it the Bráhmán, at last, died. As the Hermit was a clairvoyant, he could see that just as the Bráhmán was giving up the ghost, a *Sivadut* entered the room with a *Puspakrath* and, invisible to physical eyes, carried away the astral body of the Bráhmán to *Siva-lok*.

At this sight, the serenity of the ascetic's mind was disturbed and a doubt arose in it. "If the Bráhmán could be taken to heaven for his daily offering only a handful of *Bél* leaves to his

God Mahadev," so he soliloquised, "it must, indeed, be a very easy way to salvation. When salvation could be had in the midst of domestic enjoyment, and at such a small cost, what is the use of such self-abnegation as I have been practising since my boyhood ; I closely watched the daily routine of the Bráhmaṇ's life, but found him working almost all day long, to earn his bread and what he did for the purpose of his salvation, was simply the daily throwing of a few *Bel* leaves at his Mahadev. If salvation could be had so easily, and without any sacrifice, why should I be so foolish as to practise all this austere penance ? I have sacrificed everything, since my childhood, never enjoyed the comforts of a happy home, and all, it now appears, for no very meritorious use." These and the like thoughts crossed his mind, and the anchorite determined not to go back to his hermitage any more, but to re-enter this "vale of tears" with which he had cut off all connection since his infancy. He took his permanent abode in the Brahman's house, and as the widowed Bráhmaṇi wanted a man to look after her affairs, the ascetic volunteered his services which the old lady gladly accepted.

And now the Hermit began to live as a member of the Bráhmaṇ's family. He loved the Bráhmaṇ's children, and they, in their turn, grew fond of him. He would seldom stir out of the house, unless pressed by the Bráhmaṇi to do so. In the morning, after his ablutions he would offer a few *Bel* leaves to Mahadev, and then for the rest of the day he would play and sport with the children.

The ascetic thus lived for some years in the Bráhmaṇ's house. At length his last day drew near ; and when his soul was about to bid good-bye to its old tenement, he was horrified in beholding the *Yâmduts* standing by his death-bed, instead of the *Shivaduts*, as he had all along been expecting. His agony grew terribly acute at the sight of the *Yâmduts*. His pale face grew paler, his lips quivered, and an excruciating pain convulsed his whole frame. He uttered a faint shriek, and was then silent for a moment. At length he mustered up his courage, faced the grim *Yâmduts*, and spoke to them as follows :—

Hermit—Begone villains, why are you here ?

Yâmdut—Your time is up, and we are here to take you to hell.

Hermit—Hell ! why to hell ?

Yâmdut—That's what you deserve

Hermit—That's what I deserve ! and why ?

Yâmdut—You have failed as an ascetic, and you have failed as a man of the world. And hell is the portion of those who fail in their duties.

Hermit—Why ? Did I not do the very same things that the Brahman did, and for which he was taken to heaven ? Did I not offer my *Bel* leaves daily to Mahadev like him ?

Yâmdut—Not exactly. You failed miserably. The case of the pious Brahman was quite different from that of yours. He had to work the whole day to feed a host of his children and his wife, and in spite of such a heavy burden on him, he managed to snatch a few moments to worship his God daily ; whereas you who had no such work to do, only grew fat on the rice of the widow, threw a few *Bel* leaves on Mahadev, and idled away all the rest of your valuable time. This is not what was expected of you. Go you must to hell.

Saying this the *Yâmduts* carried the struggling astral body of the ascetic with them to Pluto's dreary dome and consigned it to the place it best deserved.

III. A DOOMED CONVICT.

DURING the reign of a certain Hindu king in India, a Bráhmaṇ committed murder, and he would have been sentenced to capital punishment, had not his caste protected him. The convict being a Bráhmaṇ, the law prohibited his execution, but the king planned his destruction in another way.

The Darbar assembled, the king sat on the *Masnad* and pronounced the following judgment upon the trembling convict : " Prisoner at the bar ! Bráhmaṇ though you are, you have committed such an atrocious crime that nothing short of capital punishment would meet the ends of justice, but the law spares you, as you happen to be a Bráhmaṇ, so I pass the following sentence : That you be incarcerated in the State Jail for this night, and that you do choose any one of the four things that you will find in the four corners of the cell for your use for the night ; if you fail to select one, by the rising of to-morrow's sun, your nose and ears will be cut off, and you will be banished from the realm. Now beware and begone."

No sooner had the judgment been pronounced than the convict was dragged away from the *Darbar* hall, and thrown into the prison. The heavy grated doors were shut from outside. From the light of a lamp, that burnt in the centre of the cell, the convict was soon able to discern the four objects mentioned in the judgment, in as many corners of the prison. They were : (1) a beauteous damsel of sixteen summers in Mahomedan attire, (2) a tempting dish of savoury meat just out of the *Dekohi*, (3) a sparklig bottle of liquor, and (4) a shining phial labelled 'poison.'

Now, the convict debated within himself what to do. He would have to select any one of the four things for his night's use, or his banishment with mutilated limbs was sure at tha rising of the morrow's sun. At first he wavered between the selecting of an article and the banishment with mutilation. The idea of the latter sickened his heart, and he fell back upon the former. Now, which one of the four to select, was the next question. To select the beauteous girl, thought he, was out of question, as she was by all appearance a Mahomedan ; to partake of the meat was impossible for a Bráh-

man ; to drink the poison and commit suicide, for which sin, the *Shastras* provide no *pray-ashohitya* is equally impossible ; to drink the intoxicating liquor is no less a sin.

He paused, and pondered for a long time, but could not induce himself to accept any one of the four presents the king was so graciously pleased to make for his reception in the prison. Once more he thought of accepting the banishment, but the very idea of its trouble and insult dissuaded him. The damsel in the prison corner looked askance at the confused convict, and laughed. The prisoner deliberated long, but failed yet to come to a definite conclusion. It was past midnight. At last, with much difficulty, he induced himself to select the liquor as the next worst. He opened the bottle, and took a draught. In a few minutes it worked in his brain, and induced him to take another draught. Another and yet another followed, till, at length, the Bráhmán became thoroughly drunk. Every good thought vanished from his mind ; the vice from which he had hitherto shrunk back with terror, had now full mastery over him, and under the influence of the liquor its ugliness had disappeared. The liquor he drank shar-

pened his appetite, and he felt hungry like a wolf ; and as his good sense had already left him he fell to the meat and devoured it with the voracity of a glutton. The liquor and the meat combined did their work so thoroughly, that the Bráhmaṇ no longer hesitated to make love with the prison girl, whom he had, a few minutes before, loathed even to touch. Along with the night, however, his intoxication passed away, and when the day broke, he was quite conscious again. Bitter repentance now arose in his mind, and to his utter dismay, he found himself a lost man—lost in this life, as well as in the life to come. To put an end to his wretched existence he then drank the contents of the phial labelled ‘poison’ and dropped down dead on the cold stone floor of the cell before the turnkey had come to unlock the doors.

The king heard from the prison girl, the details of the convict’s action, and was glad that his plan had succeeded so well.

IV. "GANDDHARVA SEN MARGAYA ?!."

(*Gandddharva Sen is dead?!).*).

WHILE an eastern Moslem prince was holding his *Darbar*, his old Vizir rushed in, lamenting and crying piteously. On being asked the reason for his lamentations, he kissed the foot of the throne, bowed down his head almost to the ground, and replied :—"Khodawand ! Gandddharva Sen *Mârgayá* (Khodaband ! Gandddharva Sen is dead) " Ah ! Allah ! poor Gandddharva Sen is dead !," exclaimed the Emperor and burst into tears. The *Darbar* broke up, and everybody was ordered to observe the State mourning for 41 days, in memory of the deceased, and the Badsha repaired to his *Harem* weeping. The *Begams* of the *Harem*, seeing their lord in such grief, enquired of the reason, and being told in a choked voice that Gandddharva Sen was dead, they all began to cry, and beat their breasts. The whole *zenana* presented a scene of great grief and consequent confusion. A servant-girl of the senior Begam, hearing the

uproar, hastened to the chamber and asked her mistress "Badshazadi ! what are you all crying for ?" The Begam drew a deep sigh, and said : " Oh dear ! poor Gandddharva Sen is dead." The girl anxiously enquired ; " Who was Gandddharva Sen to your majesty ?" " Oh ! indeed," exclaimed the Begam, " that I don't know," and she ran to the *Badsha*, and asked him their connection with the deceased. The *Badsha*, failing to give any reply, felt ashamed, and went to his *Darbar* Hall, sent for the Vizir, and on his appearance asked him : " Vizir ! who was Gandddharva Sen to us that we are all mourning his death." " Pardon, Bandenawaz !" exclaimed the Vizir, " your slave is not aware of it but he saw the *Kotawal* crying, and saying that Gandharva Sen was dead, and so he too cried for company." " Thou art an arrant fool indeed," thundered forth the monarch, " go and enquire who Gandddharva Sen was." The Vizir bowed and ran as fast as his legs could carry him. He met the *Kotawal* near the palace gate and asked him. The *Kotawal* looked vacantly at the Vizir's face, and said that he was not personally acquainted with Gandharva Sen but as the *Jamadar* came crying and said that poor Gand-

dharva Sen was dead, he wept and informed it to him. Then they both went to the *Jamadar* ; the *Kotawal* asked him who Ganddharva Sen was for whose death he had wept. "Oh sir !" replied the *Jamadar*, "I can't say who or what he was, but as I saw my wife was weeping over the death of one Ganddharva Sen, I felt pity for her, and went weeping to you, to report his death. You know, sir, that crying and laughing excite sympathetic emotions, and I cried because my wife did so." The three, then, went to the *Jamadar's* wife, who as well denied any personal knowledge of the deceased, and simply replied that as she went to take her bath in a tank she found the village *Dhovin* crying bitterly and saying that her poor Ganddharva Sen was dead. The party then proceeded to the *Dhovin's* house, and asked her as to what Ganddharva Sen was to her, that she had cried so piteously in the morning, for his death. "Oh ! Ill luck to me !" cried out the *Dhovins* "my heart bleeds for him still, he was my pet donkey. I loved him as my own son," so saying the *Dhovin* again burst into tears. The party felt ashamed, and quickly dispersed.

The Vizir returned to the palace sadder but wiser. He prostrated himself before the Monarch and told him all—that the deceased Gandharva Sen was no other than a *Dhovin's* donkey. The Badsha pardoned him.

When the news reached the *Harem*, the Begams burst into aloud laughter, and made themselves merry at the cost of the Badsha and his courtiers. They laughed and laughed again till their sides ached.

V. FAITH.

ON a fine autumn morning the divine couple *Hara* and *Parvati* were taking an aerial excursion round the earth. When they came over the *Tribeni ghat*, Parvati's eyes fell upon the immense crowd that had assembled below. She asked her consort :

"Lord ! what is that huge gathering for ?"

"To-day is, my love !" replied Hara "an auspicious day. People, by their ablutions in the *Tribeni* waters, will have their sins of this and previous births washed away and will go to Heaven."

"If it be so, Lord !" asked Parvati again, "why then is your hell so very full always ?"

"The query does not befit you, dear !" rejoined Hara, "I will, however, explain this by a practical example."

Saying this, he whispered some thing to Parvati's ear, and they both descended at the *Ghât*. Hara turned into a corpse, and Parvati sat by its side and began to weep. The attention of the bathers was drawn ; they gathered

round the spot and enquired about the matter. Parvati explained to them in broken sobs : that on their way to the *Tribeni ghât*, her husband tripped and fell down suddenly and died, and that she being a woman—alone and helpless—knew not how to cremate her husband's dead body. The by-standers were moved and several of them volunteered to help her. Parvati thanked them and said :

“ There is one thing, gentlemen, to which I must draw your attention first before I avail myself of your kind help. My husband, when dying, enjoined me strictly that none but persons free from sins, should touch his dead body ; a sinner touching it will die instantly. Now gentlemen ! if under the circumstance, you think you can help me, kindly delay not the cremation.”

The volunteers shrank back and dispersed. No one would come near Parvati again ; she sat there alone and weeping till two drunkards, who had evidently passed the night in a house of ill-fame, came to her aid. Parvati told them all, and warned them that persons not purified of their sins, must not touch the corpse, and that if they did so, they would die instantly.

“Foh !” retorted the drunkards, “you want sinless men to cremate the corpse ? That is very easy, especially today. We will return in a minute washing off all our sins.”

Saying this, they ran into the waters of the *Tribeni*, came back in drenched cloth, shouldered the corpse, and carried it to the cremation-ground. But no sooner was the corpse carried there than it vanished as well as the goddess Parvati.

Hara.—“Now, my love ! you see how few of these men will be benefited by the immersion. Only those who have faith, firm faith in the holy waters of the *Tribeni*, will have their sins washed. It is the faith, and not the ablutions alone, that purifies a man of his sins. Of all the bathers of to-day the two drunkards only had absolute faith in the immersion and they alone were fit to go to heaven above the rest.

Parvati bowed silently and the journey was resumed.

VI. THE BRAHMAN AND HIS IDOLS.

ONCE upon a time there lived a *Bráhma*n who, though married, was childless. All the same, however, the Brahman loved his wife. He had a good many idols of different metals in the house for worship. Having had a moderate income from his rent-free lands, the Brahman passed his days happily in the worship of his family gods. Neither cares nor anxieties ever crossed his mind, till one day he was disturbed by the thought of finding out which of the gods, whose images he worshipped, was the most powerful. He considered the merits of the idols one by one, but failed to decide about their comparative superiority. He meditated for days together, but yet was in the same state of doubt and indecision. The question sat heavily upon his mind and disturbed his peace. His looks showed that he was unhappy. His wife perceived this change and enquired of its cause, but he would give no reply. By and by he became demented. He would come out of the

house and wander aimlessly through the streets of the village with the question constantly on his lips as to which of his idols was the best. Men mocked, boys ran after him, and the village grew too hot for him altogether. He then took shelter in a neighbouring forest, though his wife tried her best to dissuade him.

One day as he was wandering listlessly in the forest, he saw a wood-cutter, and put to him the same question as to the relative superiority of his family idols. The wood-cutter taking him for a mad man wantonly replied : "The idol that stands the best test under a smith's hammer is the most powerful." The Brahman readily accepted the answer and returned home. The first thing, accordingly that he did, was to get a hammer from the nearest smithy and with it to strike his idols in order to test their toughness or power as he called it. All the idols, as could be expected, broke to pieces save one which being made of solid bronze stood the proof of the hammer. The Brahman selected this image for his worship, and flung the shattered pieces of the other images into a tank. His wife, however, wept at the sacrilege, scolded him, and tried to bring

him back to his senses, but to no effect. She was frightened, too, at what her husband had done, as she expected that the wrath of the gods would fall on their heads.

The idol that passed the hard ordeal of the hammer was an image of *Srikrishnaji*. The Brahman began worshipping it with deep devotion. He would sit before it for hours together forgetting hunger and thirst. So very absorbed did he become in his thoughts while worshipping, that he could not catch even the sound of drums if beaten near him. In short, he became, while engaged in worship, so thoroughly absorbed in meditation that he hardly perceived the existence of the outer world for the time.

An incident happened one day, which made the *Bráhmaṇ* still firmer in his new faith. He had performed the *Pujas* with his accustomed zeal, but when he rose he found, to his utter surprise, that the offerings of rice and fruits which he had placed before the idol had disappeared. His joy knew no bounds, as he believed that Srikrishna must have partaken of them himself. Thenceforward his faith in the idol became unshaken, more so, as he found

that the offerings disappeared every day with the most unfailing regularity.

. One day as the Brahman had just opened his eyes accidentally in the midst of his meditations before the idol, he saw a big rat running into a hole in the *Puja* room. His firm faith in the powers of the idol was shaken. He now began to think that it was the rat and not the idol that had been daily eating up the offerings of his *Pujas*.

The doubt destroyed the serenity of his mind. When he sat down to worship the next day, he could not concentrate his thoughts as on previous days, and consequently remained quite alive to the external world. The rat, as was its wont, came in due time, and was caught by the Brahman. He now began to think that the wood-cutter must have misled him. The idol he was worshipping could never be the most powerful ; for, if it had been so, the rat would not have been allowed to eat up his offerings. The idol instead of being the all-powerful one was evidently a powerless image. His faith in the figure failed, and he consigned it to the same tank in which lay the broken remains of its former companions. The rat,

thought the Brahman, must be more powerful than all the idols, and, therefore, was the most proper object of worship. So the rat was duly installed on the throne vacated by the idol and he went on worshipping it with the same fervour and devotion that he had paid to the idol. The rat proved to be a god thoroughly alive, as it ate up the offerings before the very eyes of the Brahman himself.

It so happened that, one morning, as the Brahman was deeply engaged in his meditation before the rat-god, a cat sprang upon it and tore it away from the throne. "What!" thought the Brahman, "the cat must be more powerful than the rat or else why the rat should allow itself thus to be carried off by the former. The cat then was the fittest object of worship." Now the cat occupied the place of the rat, and the Brahman began worshipping her with great devotion. The cat grew fat and fatter on the milk offered to her by her worshipper. The Brahman would reserve the greater portion of the milk from his cow for the cat, and would himself drink but very little of it. His wife did not like this, but there was no help for it, as the least wish of the

Brahman was law in the house. She, however, hated the creature. One day the cat, wishing for more milk than was allowed to her, overturned the milk-pan. The Brahman's wife, who was peeling vegetables with a knife at the time flung it in a rage at the cat. The weapon hit the animal in a vital part and it dropped down dead. The lady was awfully frightened at this act of her, as she knew well that her husband would not spare the killer of his feline deity. She apprehended the direst consequence. There was, however, no help for it. She disposed of the dead cat in the best way she could. But what excuse would she make for the cat's disappearance to her husband? This thought troubled her sorely, and she became very uneasy in mind. Failing to devise any excuse, she thought it best to allow things to take their own course and resumed her household work which the cat's death had interrupted for the moment. The Brahman, who had been out when the catastrophe upon his deity had fallen, came home, bathed and entered his *Puja* room. The cat was so fond of him that no sooner would he enter the room than she would come to him mewling and wagging her tail, and


would caress his legs by rubbing herself against them. But now there was no Mother Tabby to welcome him. The Brahman called out for the pussy, but she did not turn up; he called again and again but to no purpose. He then called his wife and asked her what had become of the cat. The wife fearing to tell a lie to her husband whom she was enjoined by the *Sastras* to worship as her god, told him what had really happened. The Brahman, much to his relief, looked at the death of the cat from a point of view quite different from that which his wife had expected. He exclaimed: "My dear! thou art even more powerful than the cat as it has succumbed to thy strength; so I must worship thee henceforth." The wife got ashamed, bent down her head, but dared not reply. The Brahman took her into the *Puja* room and made her sit down on a dais, the throne on which his former idols had sat not being big enough to hold her. He began worshipping her as the most powerful deity of all he had ever known.

A few days passed in this way. And they were days of hard trial for the Brahman's wife. It was very difficult for her to sit still and in

the same posture for hours together, while the husband worshipped her. She was always afraid of causing disturbance by changing her position or moving. One day the worst that she had apprehended actually happened ; she moved and roused the Brahman from his deep reverie who instantly gave a slap right across her cheek and she was stunned and fell down senseless. The *Brahman* soon realized what he had done, hastily fetched water and bathed her face and eyes with it, and the wife slowly regained her consciousness. He then dismissed her with kind words. When alone, he thought that his wife certainly was not the most powerful person in the creation as she had fallen senseless under his blow, and that he himself was the most powerful. And now true knowledge dawned upon him. He began to perceive the importance of his own self. He found that his arm that gave the blow to his wife was a mere instrument, but that the hidden force which moved it must be somewhere within him. He should worship that Force or the *Mahasakti* in him. He should know his own self and realize it. For this purpose he began worshipping his inner self. In due course of

time, by this process, he knew the great Spirit working in and through himself and every other thing in the universe, and was liberated from the bonds of *karma*.

VII. THE FISHWIFE'S STONE WEIGHT.

 *Bráhma*n, while passing through a fish-market, happened to see a stone weight in the scale of a fisherwoman which appeared to him to be a *Salagrám Sila*. He drew near, examined it closely and found it to be a genuine *Salagrám*. He was quite disgusted with the woman for her so using the sacred Emblem of worship ; for she was weighing out her fish with it and casting it carelessly on the ground when not in requisition. The *Brahmán* wished to have it for worship, at any cost, and offered a *Rupée* to the woman for it. She, however, declined the offer, and said that as the stone had ensured good luck to her since the day she had picked it up from the Gange's bed, she would not part with it on any account. The *Bráhma*n raised his offer, but the woman still declined. But as he was determined to have the stone image, the *Bráhma*n at last offered a heavy sum. The amount being beyond her expectation, the woman could no longer withstand the temptation, and parted with her weight.

The *Bráhmaṇ* took the *Salagrám* and went home in a merry mood. He having purified it with the five varieties of cow's excrescence (*Panchagavya*) installed it on the throne and worshipped it with the other idols of the house. During the night, while the *Bráhmaṇ* was fast asleep, the idol god appeared to him in all its divine brilliancy and said :

"Fool ! why hast thou brought me under thy roof ? I love the fishwife's scale better than the throne. Send me back at once, or keep me back if thou wantest thy destruction and that of thy family."

The *Brahman* started from his slumber, and woke with a heavy heart. He, however, did not pay much heed to the dream, and passed it over as the mere creation of his disturbed brain. But the dream repeating itself the next night, made the *Brahman* disconsolate. He said to himself : "Have I, then, actually incurred the wrath of the God Narayan by removing Him to my house ? But, how can that be ? He is surely in a better place now, and I do not think, I have failed in my devotion to Him. Why does He, then, want to go back to the fish scale ? Be that as it may, I will, on no account

part with Him, since I have once got Him in my house. I care not for the consequence, whatever it might be. I will go on worshipping Him." The *Bráhma*n was a pious devotee and resolved firmly not to part with the Emblem, but to keep it for good or for evil.

The dreadful dream began to realize itself actually from the next day. The only child of the *Brahman* who was hale and hearty suddenly got ill and expired. With pious resignation the devotee calmly bore the shock and did not flinch a bit from his firm resolution. But this was not all. He dreamt again and was warned of the death of his wife, if the idol was not sent back. But he remained as firm in his resolve as before. He would not part with the holy stone on any account. The next morning, his wife died but he did not shed a tear and remained calm and quiet. The following night the stone god appeared unto the *Brahman* in his dream for the fourth time and again wanted to be removed. If this was not done, said the god, a thunderbolt would burst upon him on the morning. The *Brahman* received the decree of his fate with no greater concern than he had done on previous occasions, though this

time it was the question of his own life and death.

The day dawned. The *Brahman* after performing the necessary worship of the idol, placed it upon his head, came out of his *Puja* room and sat in the open courtyard of the house awaiting his doom. The hitherto serene surface of the firmament began to darken. A heavy mass of cloud, by and by, overspread the whole sky, the heavens grew darker and darker and completely hid the sun. The bright day turned gloomy. The wind became high, and with it came a heavy downpour and occasional thunder claps. Vivid lightnings flashed fast and quick. Loud peals of thunder rent the whole firmament, and the thunder bolts began to strike the trees close to the *Brahman*. Expecting death every moment, he sat calmly with the idol on his head. He was quite prepared to meet death rather than part with his idol. He thought of dying with the idol on his head, and would not leave it on any account. The warfare of the elements continued till evening. When lo ! the clouds began to scatter, nature became pacified again. The storm abated. The moon shone bright, and shortly a calm after

the storm reigned over the earth and the heavens.

Being glad that his devotee got successfully over the hard ordeal, the God Narayan appeared to him in a halo of brilliant light with all his grandeur and glory, having his four ensigns—the conchshell, the circular sword, the mace, and the lotus—one in each of his four mighty hands. The brilliancy of the God dazzled the devotee's eyes. However, he fixed his gaze upon the holy figure and actually saw the original form before him—form which he had hitherto known in his imagination only. His joy was inexpressible. He mechanically prostrated himself before the divinity, kissed his feet and stood up. The God addressed him thus : “My son ! thou hast stood the test well. I try those who love me alone, and receive the successful ones. Thy trial is over, come with me to heaven.”

So saying, *Nārāyan* took the *Brahman* in his flower charriot, ascended up, and vanished in the clouds. The *Brahman* was taken to heaven. There, a magnificent edifice of solid gold was set apart for him with necessary furniture and establishment. No sooner was

he conducted there than he met his beloved wife and his dear son who had been dead, and who clasped him in their fond arms never to part again.

VIII. NARAD'S DISCOMFITURE.

DEVARSHI *Narad*, as the name implies, was a Rishi amongst the gods. He, sometimes, thought too much of himself. The all-knowing *Bhagavan Srikrishna* perceiving it, wanted to give him a lesson.

One day as *Srikrishna* and his divine consort *Lakshmi* were sitting together in *Golak Dham*, *Narad* went there to offer his usual *Pujas* and prostrated himself at the feet of the holy couple. *Srikrishna* blessed the *Devarshi* and said : “ *Narad* ! I intend perambulating the earth, wouldst thou accompany me ? ” “ Most gladly, Lord ” replied *Narad*.

The next day *Srikrishna* and *Narad* descended from heaven to earth and commenced their journey. They crossed several rivers and mountains, visited many countries and pushed on their way towards the south. One day as they were passing through a desert, *Srikrishna* feigned thirst, and asked *Narad* to get some water from a house that stood at the outskirts of the desert. *Narad* ran towards the house.

It was a big mansion, and a stalwart *Rajput* kept the gate. As *Narad* had free access even to the *zenana* of the gods he without asking the permission of the gate-keeper, made his way towards the inner apartments of the house. But he had to deal with a tough customer here on earth. The gate-keeper caught him by the neck and thrust him out. At this unexpected treatment, *Narad* was thunderstruck, his rage knew no bounds. Would a mortal treat him thus? With eyes flashing fire *Narad* looked at the man and exclaimed: "Thou dog! darest thou raise thy hand against *Devarshi Narad*? Knowest thou not who I am?"

The gate-keeper—I care not to know of an insignificant mad cap like thee. Get out, or further insults await thee.

Narad—Darest thou insult me, villain?

Thus saying the *Devarshi* attempted to reduce the gate-keeper to ashes with the fire that flashed forth from his eyes. The *Rishis*, in ancient times, had the power of burning even adamantine rocks to ashes with the fire that they could produce from their eyes. But *Narad* failed in the present instance. He tried again and again, but with the same result. He stood stupified

over his failure. The fire against which even the mighty Himalayas were not proof lost all its effect upon a common mortal ! What could be the reason ? *Narad* was thinking for a moment, but the insolent gate-keeper did not allow him time to do so. He dragged him to the side of an ocean close by the mansion, which had millions of mundane eggs floating over it. He took up an egg, and holding it before *Narad's* eyes, said : "Tiny creature ! Thou thinkest too much of thyself, now see how insignificant thou art in the creation of the Bhagaván. Look at yonder ocean of time and the countless eggs that are fast flowing over it to eternity each as big, and many bigger than this solar system we live in. Thou art but an atom in one of these eggs. Now realize thy position in the creation and be wise and learn to think lowly of thyself." No sooner had he finished, than everything disappeared. *Narad* looked around and saw only *Srikrishna* standing before him smiling.

Now better sense prevailed upon the *Devarshi*. He understood all that was meant by the phantasm, fell at the God's feet, and said : "Lord ! thou hast taught me a lesson to humble down my pride, I will never forget it."

IX. KING VIKRAMADITYA AND THE TWO HUMAN SKULLS.

ONE day while the renowned Raja Vikramaditya of Ujjāini was holding his court, a *Rakshas* appeared with two old human skulls and placing them before his Majesty, bowed, and addressed him : "Sire ! I have come to test, how worthy is your Majesty of your celebrity as a reader of mysteries. Here are two skulls, examine them and tell me which one is of a man and which of a woman. I give you a week's time. I will come again on the seventh day, and if your Majesty give a correct reply, well and good, otherwise I will devour all the men and the beasts of your kingdom." Saying this the *Rakshas* vanished.

After the *Rakshas* had disappeared, the courtiers looked at one another's face and kept silent. The king solemnly asked the *Navaratna* of his *savā* if they would be able to solve the problem, but they all nodded their heads in dissent. The "Nine Gems," as they were called, were the as many celebrated literary men of the time ; the immortal *Kavi Kalidas* being at the

head. The king dismissing the *Darbar* retired to his *Andarmahal* with an anxious mind.

The rumour, that the Raja failed to reply to the query of the *Rakshas* and that the demon would come on the seventh day and devour everybody, spread like wild fire all over the kingdom. This caused a great panic, and a regular stampede began. Before the day fixed for the arrival of the demon the kingdom was entirely deserted. Even the "Nine gems" of the court dared not stay. The king and the members of the royal family were the only persons that remained in the realm.

The poet Kalidas was the last to leave the town. On the evening of the sixth day, that is, the evening preceding the morning of the *Rakshas*'s advent, he left the town and went into a thick forest which stood at the outskirts of the capital. When he went into the midst of the *jungle*, the shades of the night became thick and he missed his way. The ferocious beasts-of-prey sallied forth from their dens in search of food, and the forest began to resound with their howlings. The dull night air moaned deeply, as if, to lament over Kalidas's distress. The dark gloomy night looked awfully dismal.

Kalidas's heart beat audibly. He was at his wit's end. At last mustering up his courage he climbed up an old big banyan tree to save himself from the wild beasts. He tied himself up against a branch with his *Pagri* to prevent an involuntary fall.

In this state, more dead than alive, the poet clung to the branch for some time. As the night advanced the denizens of the *jungle* began to return to their dens after having satiated their hunger. The moon which had hitherto been giving light to the other half of the world began to peep from the eastern horizon and the forest assumed a mild aspect. When there was a dead calm, a conversation in low tone from the tree-top attracted Kalidas's ears, he heard two voices speaking as follows :

First voice.—Dear ! Have you not promised to satiate my yearning for human flesh ? *Enceinte* as I am, I hope, you will not be unmindful of your promise.

Second voice.—Yes, my love ! I have not forgotten it.

First voice.—But pray, dear, when would the happy day come ? You have kept me long in expectation.

Second voice.—To-morrow, and in any quantity, dear !

First voice.—In any quantity ! How can that be ?

Second voice.—I have devised a plan, and if it succeed, we would hold a high carnival over human flesh for some days together. I have presented before the Raja Vikramaditya a couple of old human skulls : one of a male and the other of a female, and have asked him to distinguish the one from the other within seven days which will expire to-day. If the Raja fail, and fail he must, as the solution of the problem is far beyond the reach of human knowledge, the men and the beasts of his realm will be our victuals. Is it not a good plan ? my love !

First voice.—Yes, dear. But pray tell me how the problem can be solved ? I'm very curious.

Second voice.—No human science can solve it ; there is only one practical way which is unknown to men, and it is this : If a flexible wire be pressed into the ear-hole of the skull and it make its way towards the throat it must be a male's skull. The reason is, that men, when entrusted with a secret, can keep it safely in

them and do not give it out, so the canal of the male's skull from the earhole runs down towards the throat. But with the female's skull the case is otherwise. The wire when pressed through the earhole is sure to pass out by the mouth, as no sooner are women confided with a secret than they speak it out. Do you think, any human intelligence can be shrewd enough to unravel such a mystery? Pray, don't be annoyed with me, dear, as my riddle relates to a merit of your fair sex.

First voice.—Certainly not, dear. The plan is excellent indeed! Oh! I only wish that the day had dawned earlier.

The speakers stopped. Kalidas's heart leapt with joy. He remained motionless for a few minutes, and then with the utmost caution to avoid the least chance of creating a sound he slowly climbed down and ran towards the capital as fast as his legs could carry him. On he went, all the way running, and just as the day dawned he reached the Palace gate, panting for breath. He met the king and told him of his adventure and good luck. The happy tidings spread throughout the kingdom and the people began pouring back in numbers. The

“Nine gems” assembled and before midday, everything was almost in its former order again.

The *Rakshas* came at the appointed time and asked the king for the reply to his query. The king pointed out Kalidas as the person who would give it. The two skulls were brought out and Kalidas pressed a wire through the earhole of one of the skulls and finding that it passed towards the throat, he said, it was of a man and explained the reason. He then tried the other skull and the wire being pressed into its earhole went out by the cavity of the month. He declared it to be a female's skull, and gave the reason. The *Rakshas*, though discomfited, was very glad to find that human intelligence and knowledge were not inferior to theirs. He bowed to the king and disappeared. It is needless to say how heavily he was admonished by his greedy spouse on his return home with the unwelcome news of his failure.

X. WHAT IT IS TO BE A *NOKAR* (SERVANT).

It was a pitch dark and windy night, a heavy downpour of rain had just ceased having caused the streets and the pathways muddy and slippery. It was midnight. A respectable-looking old man was scudding on the highway leading to the ancient capital of Dehli. He was going towards the Palace of the Emperor. A messenger of the Emperor followed him. But just as the man had entered the city, down came the rain in torrents again with all its fury, and the big drops struck like so many arrows upon the weary traveller. It became impossible for him to proceed further. He took shelter under the eaves of the thatch of a hut that stood by the side of the road. The occupants of the hut—a man and his wife—who were half-awake enjoying the chilly night in their warm bed, started at the sound of the hurried foot-steps of the traveller. The wife asked her husband in whisper, “who makes that sound, dear ?” “Wait,” replied the husband,

“my love, he may be a burglar out on house-breaking. Let me see.”

“You needn’t go out” said the wife, “it can never be a thief. A thief would not stir out of his house in this tempestuous night.”

“Yes, you seem to be right. Then it might be a hungry jackal or a dog.”

“Not even that. Beasts would not leave their dens in this killing downpour, even if they would die of hunger.”

“What else could it be then ?

“It can not but be a *Nokar*. A servant of some body, and most likely that of the *Padsha*, the penalty for delay in appearance to whose summons is death. The Emperor might have taken a fancy to send for one of his servants even in this dark and stormy night, and this wretched person is hastening to his master, and has perhaps taken shelter for a moment under our thatches to save himself from the beating rain. A *Padsha*’s servant is no better than a gally-slave.”

No sooner had the wife ceased speaking than a voice outside the walls murmured : “Yes, good lady ! your surmise is quite correct” and the sounds of a man’s retreating footsteps were

heard. The person was no other than the old Vizir of the "*Dehli-shwara-ba Jagadishwara-ba*" (the Emperor of Dehli or the Monarch of the world), he was sent for by his master, and on his way to the Palace had stopped for a few seconds there to save himself from the beating downpour of the stormy night.

Leaving the couple in surprise the Vizir hurried on to his master, and after carrying out his mandate, he most humbly tendered his resignation. The Emperor was surprised at this sudden action of his faithful minister, and asked for the reason. The Vizir knelt down, and explained all that had happened on his way to the Palace, and said: "Sire! pardon me, a *Nokar* I will never be again, even a woman hates a *Nokar*." He then bowed low once more to the Monarch and issued forth from the royal chamber, plunged into the deep darkness outside, and disappeared.

XI. THE FOUR MERCHANTS AND THEIR CAT.

IN ancient times, there lived in Kashmir four young friends of birth and position. They took it into their heads to start a joint trade in woollen piece-goods for which the valley was particularly famous. Each of them made an investment of a *lac* of Rupees in the business. The choicest fabrics manufactured in the country were collected and stored into the *Godowns*. But the mischievous rats wrought a great havoc among the goods, and it became necessary that something must be done at once, to get rid of the pests. The partners met and decided to bring out a strong and sagacious Persian cat, which species of the feline kind enjoyed, at that time, the particular reputation of being the cleverest opponent of these mischievous rodents.

In due course the cat arrived. It was a splendid animal. The legs being the most useful limbs of a cat the friends thought it necessary to be very cautious in respect of any

possible injury to them. Not depending upon the servants, as the animal was purchased at a great cost, each of them took upon himself the responsibility of taking care of one of its legs, for which they entered into a solid compact.

It so happened, that one night as the cat was in pursuit of the rats, his movements upset a bale of goods, which contused one of his hind legs. The partner in charge of this leg called a veterinary expert for the treatment of the limb. The surgeon came and bandaged the leg with cotton soaked in turpentine. The cat was a restless animal, and unmindful of the doctor's injunction for thorough rest, moved about with the three legs that were still sound. One night when the establishment had retired to sleep, he caused, in one of his limpish walks, the bandaged leg to take fire from a *'chilam* which a servant had just smoked. As the bandage was soaked in turpentine, it was easily in a blaze. The cat in pain and fright ran into the *godown* and jumped from bale to bale thus setting fire to the entire stock. It was too late when the servants awoke. The goods had already been reduced to ashes.

The next morning, the partners met and

the member in charge of the wounded leg of the cat was held liable for the entire damage caused by the fire, as it was through the leg in his charge that the catastrophe happened. An action for damage was brought against him in the King's Court, and the best available legal practitioners were engaged on both sides.

On the last day of hearing the court room was thronged to suffocation. The wise old Judge sat on the Bench with a solemn face, and the counsel for the plaintiffs made a long harangue in support of his clients' claim, and was almost sure he had won the case. The old counsel for the defendant who, up to this time, had been sitting silently in a corner, now rose, and addressed the Court thus in a brief and concise speech : " My Lord ! I have very little to say in this case. Your Lordship is already aware that the leg of the cat in charge of my client was disabled on account of the injury, and could not move, whereas the other three in charge of the three other partners were sound, and capable of locomotion. It is a fact that the cat's wounded leg was bandaged, had not the legs in charge of the other partners been active, the animal could not have reached the fire

nor could he spread it over the house. The catastrophe has, therefore, been caused entirely by the locomotion brought about by the three sound legs. It is, therefore, that my client is entitled to damage instead of being liable in it."

The Judge, for a few minutes, deeply considered the learned counsel's sound arguments, and at last decided the case in favour of the defendant.

The anxious crowd watching the case loudly applauded the worthy counsel and dispersed. The defendant went home in a merry mood not forgetting to amply remunerate his counsel who saved him from heavy damages.

XII. HOW A LOVER WAS SAVED.

THE system of finger-print, which is now being so widely introduced into almost all the departments of the British Government, is believed to have been in vogue in China several centuries back. The following story will show how the Chinese first got the idea of this system of identification.

In days of yore, there lived in Peking a wealthy mechanical engineer of extensive business. His work-shop covered many Bighas of land and gave employment to hundreds of men. The engineer was old and childless. His orphan niece, the sole comfort of his old age, lived with him, and he was dotedly fond of her. It was believed in the neighbourhood that he had bequeathed all his property, movable and immovable, to his darling niece. She was just in her sixteenth year, and was one of the prettiest girls in the city. She had the smallest feet, which the Chinese value so much as an emblem of beauty, and was well accomplished, too. Being the heir apparent to such an

wealthy engineer, she lacked not riches. In short, she had everything that a person would wish for. It is no wonder, therefore, that several suitors daily bent their knees to court the favour of such a charming, accomplished and wealthy damsel. Her fair fame went so far that even the youths of the Imperial family wooed her. As the adage goes, the girl had more suitors than the number of her old slippers. It was, however, a peculiar characteristic of the belle that she gave encouragement to none of her wooers, rather she scorned with such haughtiness their fervent solicitations that they lost heart and thought it prudent not to molest her any more. In a very short time, all the suitors, except a peasant youth, left her one by one. Now it was no longer a secret that the lady took a fancy for the rustic youth and that was why she had been so very cold to her other lovers. Her uncle soon came to know this. He reprimanded her for her foolishness, and passed strict orders to his servants that the peasant suitor might not have ingress into the house again.

On the night of the very day this order was passed, the engineer was murdered in his

bed-room, and his office desk and box were found broken and contents gone. The grief of the niece knew no bounds. She was extremely disconsolate. The Police were at once sent for, and they began investigation. The suspicion of all concerned fell upon the unfortunate rustic suitor ; and as he was found missing from his house, the suspicion grew stronger. A vigilant search was instituted to find him out. He was, at last, arrested and lodged in Jail.

The damsel, before falling in love with the rustic suitor, had well sounded his heart ; and she could not, for one instant, harbour the thought that the foul deed could have been perpetrated by him. The shock of her uncle's death was yet quite fresh in her mind when she received the sad intelligence of her lover's peril. She became quite distracted and knew not what to do. After a couple of days' fruitless musing, she went one night to the house of an old detective officer who was known to her, and besought him to prove the innocence of her lover and to find out, if possible, the real culprit. She swore by every thing sacred to her to the innocence of her lover, and re-

presented the case before the detective in such a piteous manner that the iron heart of the Police-officer melted. He asked the lady whether she could give him any clue wherewith to trace out the real culprit. The lady vacantly stared at the officer not knowing what clue she could be able to give him. An idea suddenly struck her and she thought of the blood-stained bundle of paper in her possession, which she had secured from her uncle's bed-room on the night of his murder ; but she was not very confident that it would be of much help in finding out the murderer. However, she hastened home, brought the bundle and showed the blood finger-prints on it to the detective. The officer examined them minutely, and his face brightened up. The girl observed it, and eagerly asked him if the bundle would be of any use. The detective asked the damsel to go home, leaving the matter to him, and assured her that he would leave no stone unturned to trace out the real culprit.

The girlish simplicity with which the engineer's niece represented her lover's case to the detective, left no room for doubt in the officer's mind about his innocence. The officer

thought that if the lover was not the murderer, who else could it be. His suspicion fell upon the workmen of the engineer. He took up the bundle once more and closely inspected the blood-prints on it. He found the print of the thumb to be more distinct than the marks of other fingers. With his superior's permission, he went to the house of the murdered engineer and sent for all the employes of the firm. As the thumb-print on the bundle was of the left hand, he asked them to ink their left thumbs, one by one, on a tin slab he took with him for the purpose, and print them on a piece of paper against their names. When this was done, he with a lens carefully compared all these prints with the one in his possession, and was glad to be able to declare that one of the impressions was quite similar to that on the bundle. He then asked the workmen themselves to examine which of the impressions on the paper tallied with the blood-print. The workmen were all unanimous in supporting the verdict of the detective, and the real murderer was secured, who made a clean breast of everything. He frankly admitted that he was on the look-out for an opportunity to rob the engineer and, if

necessary, to kill him ; and he found the day of the occurrence suited him best, as on that day the engineer stopped the visit of her niece's suitor to the house. So if he could carry on his plan successfully that night the suspicion would naturally fall upon the suitor, because a disappointed lover is apt to do anything and everything. The innocent lover of the engineer's niece was at once set at liberty, and was shortly married to his lady-love. Finger-print identification from that day began to grow into importance in China, and subsequently spread widely over the world.

XIII. MAGHEYA DOMS OF BIHAR.

THOSE who had occasion to live in Bihar know very well what a terror the Magheyas were in days gone by. These depredators had no fixed home,—their favourite retreat was the Nepal Terai, and their field of action Bihar, north and south. They had selected the Nepal Terai evidently to escape from the hands of both the British and the Nepal police. When chased by the former they would climb up the Nepal Hills and make themselves scarce, and when pursued by the latter they would come down the Hills and conceal themselves in the Terai *jungles*. They were generally a robust, stalwart, well-built set of bold ruffians, and their women no less strong and courageous. Through the exertions of Sir John Edgar, the then Magistrate of the district, most of these homeless ruffians were induced to settle down to peaceful lives. He gave them lands and ploughs and taught them to cultivate the soil and live honestly. Had this not been done, I am afraid, these marauders would have, by this time, far out-

numbered the countless trees in the *jungles* they lived in. Some of the Magheyas are, however, still seen plying in the old boat, though they have considerably dwindled down in numbers. It might be in the recollection of many, with what dexterity the valuables of a Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal were robbed at Sonepur Camp by these Magheyas from an iron safe, to which a bulldog was tied. The following story is an illustration of the Magheya Dom's wit and pluck. I heard it while in Bihar, and the narrator vouched for its truth.

In days gone by, a Detective Police Sahib was sent out from Calcutta to Bihar to check the depredations of these robbers. The officer and his suite, on arrival there, pitched their tents in a big mango-grove, and began work. No sooner had the Magheya Doms got scent of this, than they formed a league to checkmate him. But it was a very hard task they undertook. The Sahib's camp was guarded by armed sentinels day and night, and it was not easy to get in there. However, one Magheya youth formed a bold plan to out-wit the Detective.

On a dark night the gallant hero, with a few

pieces of rope and other requisites, stealthily crept out of his den. On reaching the grove in which the Sahib was encamped, he climbed up a tree that stood at the farthest end, and made his way towards the camp by jumping from tree to tree, silently and briskly like a squirrel; where the trees stood too far apart for a successful jump, he tied a piece of rope to a branch of the tree he was on, and with its help, swung on to the next. In this way he continued his stealthy march till he reached the big mango tree under which stood the tent. The sentinel, as usual, paced to and fro before the tent, never dreaming that a man from above would drop into his master's tent at midnight.

Now the Magheya had to get into the tent, and he had a plan ready made. He looked on all sides and finding the coast clear, tied a stout rope to one of the overhanging branches of the tree, and with a burning charcoal made an opening at the top of the tent large enough for his ingress. It did not take him long to get into his enemy's tent, where in he found a candle burning and the officer fast asleep in his bed with his *Memshahib*. The glistening gold watch of the Sahib on the dressing table

and a precious diamond ring on the finger of his fair spouse attracted the Magheya's immediate attention. In the twinkling of an eye he secured the articles, and fearing lest the owners should awake, he made a hasty retreat, heaving, of course, a deep sigh for the other valuables that he had perforce to leave behind. He then joined his comrades who were at a safe distance anxiously waiting for the return of the hero of the night.

The next morning the Detective found his watch missing and enquired of his wife who uttered a faint shriek and asked him if he knew of her ring. Now there was a confusion in the camp. The servants and guards were all summoned, but none knew anything about the watch or the ring. At last the opening in the tent cloth was noticed, and the truth dawned upon all. Heaven and earth were moved to trace out the robber. But the Magheya boy had shown a clean pair of heels and all efforts to recover the stolen property proved futile. When every means failed the Sahib proclaimed a free pardon and a reward, if the daring burglar would voluntarily surrender himself and restore the articles. This had the desired effect. The

Magheya boy appeared before him with the watch and the ring and got the promised reward.

XIV. A PLAGUE STORY.

IN days of yore, when time was young, there once broke out in Asia a terrific bubonic Plague. Millions of people fell victims to the malady. The pious king of Bharat was frightened out of his wits and summoned all the old and wise priests of his realm to devise means to arrest the progress of the Plague. When the priests assembled the king said : "Holy fathers ! the Plague has come very near to my kingdom, advise me what steps should be taken to save my people." The priestly assemblage, after close consultation came out, and the foreman addressed thus : "Sire ! this is a visitation from the Almighty God, there is no means of escaping it, save by appeasing His wrath, for which we should burn incense and offer prayers." The king accepted the advice and ordered the necessary expenses to be met from the royal exchequer.

A week after the priests began their work, one midnight God Rudra appeared unto the senior priest, and said : "What dost thou want

me for"? The priest's hairs stood on their ends and he made a low bow and stammered: "Lord! all-knowing as thou art, thou knowest what we want—save us from the impending Plague." The God replied: "Thy prayer is granted, my orderly Nandi shall guard thy country against all evils," and vanished.

Early next morning this happy intelligence was communicated to the king by the priests, and they each got 25 milch-cows and 50 *kahans* of *kouris* as their reward, and departed in high glee.

Now Nandi was posted guard to see that the Plague might not enter into the kingdom. He had been vigilantly watching day and night; when one night as he was on his rounds along the frontier of the kingdom, the grim Plague assuming body and shape appeared before him and demanded admittance. Nandi showed a bold front, and with his uplifted trident, vociferated: "Be gone, Villain! A step more and you are no more." The hideous figure would not give way so easily, and the result was a terrific scuffle between the two giants. It continued long, and several hills were demolished and many trees were uplifted by coming

in contact with their adamantine bodies. At last a bargain was made, and they came to terms. It was agreed that the Plague would stay for a day in the capital and take only one man as his victim.

Next evening a hue-and-cry was raised in the city, and it was reported that fully one hundred men had died of Plague. The king at once sent for the priests and demanded for an explanation. They not knowing what to say hastened to Nandi, and asked him the reason. Nandi grew furious with rage and unable to give any reply ran out in search of the Plague. No sooner did he meet him on the dusty floor of an ill ventilated house than he caught him by the neck and thundered forth : "Rogue ! you have broken your promise, and have taken one hundred persons instead of one only contrary to what you so solemnly pledged your words to. You shall pay dearly for the breach of your promise." The Plague gave a hideous laugh and replied : "Brother ! be not angry with me, I have not broken my promise. I did actually take only one man, for which I pledged my word, but the other ninety-nine died out of fear only. They had simple fever and

ordinary glandular swellings, and these they mistook for the signs of my approach and died. Thinking further parley unnecessary, Nandi let go the Plague from his iron grip. The priests informed the king of this and went away.

XV. THE KAYASTHA AND HIS PARROT FEATHER.

ONCE upon a time there lived in Bengal a poor *Kayastha*. He was so ill off that he could hardly get two meals a day. His poverty was mostly due to his idleness. His wife constantly rebuked him and asked him to go abroad and search for employment, but he paid no heed to it and idled away his time at home. One day, at last, the wife's patience gave way, and in a fit of anger she struck her husband with her broom—the favourite weapon of offence and defence of the Indian woman. The *Kayastha* felt it keenly and left home at once. He determined not to return unless and until he had secured an employment.

So he set out on his journey and went on for days not knowing where to go. One evening he reached a river and there being no boat to ferry him across, he was obliged to pass the night under a big tree that stood on the bank. Fatigued as he was, the *Kayastha* soon fell asleep. But it being midwinter, the cold

chilly night air pierced keen into his body. He awoke and sat up. A conversation between two voices on the top of the tree in a low tone reached his ears. He listened to it attentively, and was at first afraid as to who the speakers could be. Were they ghosts or goblins? But to his relief he soon made out that they were a couple of *Suk* and *Sari*. At the time to which our story relates, the birds could converse as well as sing. They talked thus :—

Suk.—We have got a guest to-night under our tree, *Sari* dear ! as we can't feed him at this late hour of the night, we should help him in some other way, he looks so very poor.

Sari.—Yes, darling ! Certainly, that is what I was just going to tell you. Do something for him, pray. How could we help the man ? He looks very poor indeed.

Suk.—If men in distress had the power of finding out the right person to apply to for help, they would not have been unhappy. But their weak intellect fails to distinguish such a man. There is, however, a means of knowing it. If a feather of my wing be stuck on a man's ear, he would immediately acquire the powers of

distinguishing. I tear out a feather and throw it down for our guest that he might use it to his benefit.


Saying this, *Suk* plucked out a plume and flung it down. The *Kayastha*, who was eagerly hearing the talk with his ears and eyes wide open, readily picked it up and secured it carefully. No sooner did the day dawn than he retraced his steps homeward. Just on entering the town he put the feather on his ear, when, good heavens ! What met his eyes ! The busy town appeared to him an assembly of wild beasts ! He cast his eyes on a cloth shop and saw a jackal selling out cloth to a monkey ; in a confectioner's shop he saw a donkey preparing sweetmeats. An ass sitting in a chariot-and-four driven by an ape surprised him the most. The numerous pedestrians on the pathways appeared as many beasts of different kind and class. He wandered over the whole town, but failed to meet with a single genuine man. At last, being quite disgusted, he was leaving the town when his eyes fell upon such a man, in a shoe-maker, who sat on the pavement of a house with a few pairs of shoes before him for sale. What ! thought the *Kayastha*, could

the genuine man be a shoe-maker ? To be sure of the magic feather on his ear, he touched it, and found it in its proper place. He then drew near the shoe-maker and asked him to procure for him a suitable employment. The shoe-maker was quite surprised to see a gentleman wanting help from an insignificant man of low caste like himself. He knew not how he could be of any use to him. However, after a few minutes thinking, he told the *Kayastha* to come to him a week after. The *Kayastha* went away but dared not return home unemployed as he was, being afraid of further afflictions by the favourite weapon of his angry spouse. He, therefore, passed the whole week elsewhere and on the appointed day returned to his patron.

In the mean time, the shoe-maker had made a very neat pair of shoes for the king. He devoted his best skill and ingenuity to their making and spared neither pains nor cost to give the shoes the best finish. When the *Kayastha* came on the appointed day, they both set out for the Palace, the shoe-maker taking the shoes under his armpit. As the shoe-maker was not unknown to the king they easily gained

the royal audience. The shoe-maker bowed low to the king, placed the pair of shoes at the foot of the throne and stood at a respectable distance. His majesty was so very pleased with the *Nazar* that he at once asked the shoe-maker to name his reward. The tanner bowed again and prayed for a royal favour for the poor *Kayastha*. His majesty kept silent for a few minutes. He highly admired the nobleness of a low caste shoe-maker. The prayer was forthwith granted. The *Kayastha* got an appointment in the Raj, soon gained royal favour and rose to a high post, but he never forgot his *Muchi* benefactor.

XVI. THERE IS MANY A SLIP BETWEEN THE CUP AND THE LIP.

 AT the corner of a rice-field, in a bush, there nested a hedge-sparrow with his mate and two young ones just out of their eggs. It was the beginning of the cultivating season and the field in which the nest stood was shortly to be ploughed up. The hen-sparrow, on this account, was very much anxious for the removal of her young ones to a safe place. She asked her consort, but he paid no heed and simply told her to wait as it was yet too early to consider the question.

On the next morning the farmer came to inspect the field, and ordered ploughing from the next day. The anxious mother grew more disconsolate and again besought her consort to remove the young ones, but got the same reply. The next morning the ploughing of the *khet* began. The madam-bird again pressed her consort but with no better result. The plot under cultivation being a large tract of land

the ploughing was not finished that day, but it was certain to be completed the day following. On the next morning the ploughing was resumed and it began to advance gradually towards the nest of the sparrows. Now the dame-bird made a pitcous appeal to her husband not to lose any more time, but to remove the nestlings forthwith. The apparently indifferent husband did not pay more consideration to her mate's appeal, than he had done on previous occasions, and asked her to wait as the time was not yet up. At this, the hensparrow was highly angry with her consort and told him how foolish and cruel he was in delaying the removal of the young ones, as within a few minutes more the plough would run through their nest and the poor nestlings would be buried beneath the deep furrow. She asked him to bestir himself, as there was yet time to save them. The cock got angry at the repeated requests and rebuked his mate thus :

“You foolish thing, you are always hasty. You should know that many things might happen in the twinkling of an eye ? Who knows that the advancing ploughs might not come

to a stop at once and for good ? Wait, the time is not yet up."

The dame seeing further bandying of words useless kept silent. She submitted herself to her fate and taking the dear ones under her wings patiently waited for her doom with them. The ploughs every moment shortented their distance from the bush, at last they came right close to it. In a few seconds more the nest would be under the earth, when at the supreme moment, lo ! and behold ! there rose a huge column of smoke from the farmer's village and with it the cry of "Fire !" "Fire !" The ploughmen looked up and seeing the fire in the direction of their quarters hastily unyoked the bullocks and ran towards their village as fast as their legs could carry them. Before, however, they could reach home, the fire had done the mischief. The whole hamlet was reduced to ashes. All the seed-grains of the farmer were destroyed and the *khet* remained fallow for the year.

The cock-sparrow now caressing his mate said : "My love ! Now you see the truth of what I said—'There is many a slip between the cup and the lip.' The dame in reply lovingly pecked him with her beak.

XVII. HOW TO DIE.

ONCE on a time a king's priest was performing his *Pujas* at a *ghât* of the river Ganges after his ablutions, when a harlot came to take her bath there and carelessly splashed the water causing a few drops of it to fall upon his person. The priest's meditation was disturbed and he flew into a high rage and poured forth a volley of violent invectives on the woman. The harlot did not lose temper and simply smiled, and said : " Poor man ! I pity you, your *Pujas* and meditations are all a mere sham, it seems you have no control over your mind and you know not how to die." This remark incensed the Brahman all the more, and he ran towards the woman to strike her, but she being far more active and agile than her pursuer, showed him a clean pair of heels.

The priest foaming and frothing in rage went to the king and complained against the woman. The king summoned her, and on her appearance asked her why she had insulted the priest. The woman fell on her knees and said : " Sire !

I could hardly have the courage to insult even a dog of your Majesty much less your priest. The fact is, that while I was bathing in the Ganges, some drops of water accidentally touched the priest who was then worshipping there. And for this he spared me no abuse, and when I made some just remarks on his conduct he even ran to strike me. I am thus at a loss to understand what offence I committed.

“And what did you remark?” asked the king.

“Sire !” replied the woman “I conceal nothing from your majesty, I told the priest simply that if the mere touch of a few drops of water could rouse him from his reverie, his meditations and *Pujas* were only superficial, and that he would surely err at the time of his death. For this, if your majesty finds me guilty, I am at your feet.”

“What do you mean by erring at the time of death ?” demanded the king.

“It is plain enough, Sire !” replied the harlot, “what I mean is that a man, when in real meditation, finds the external world dead unto him. And those merely pretending it, are susceptible to touches of physical matters

as was the case with your majesty's priest. Such a shallow meditation does not help a man in his spiritual progress. He would surely err at the time of trial and more especially at his last moment. And it is said that a dying man builds his future in accordance with his last thought. If it pleases your majesty I can illustrate it by a practical example when I get a dying man."

"Well," said the king, "I wish you to do this. A dying man is not a rare thing in my vast dominion, one at least can be had every day, if not more."

The king dismissed the harlot, and giving orders that the case of the next dying man should instantly be reported to him, left the court.

It so happened that on the next morning the priest himself was suddenly taken ill and was in point of death, and his case was reported to the king. His majesty hastened to the priest and the harlot was also brought in. They found the priest gasping for his last breath. The harlot prayed to the king for a few minutes' private audience, which was granted. When he was alone, the woman produced a delicious

plum of extraordinary size from her vest and asked him to see whether the fruit was intact or had any hole in it. He examined it minutely and was satisfied that the fruit was a perfect one of its kind and had no mark whatever on it. She then begged him to hold the fruit at its best display before the eyes of the dying priest. He did so, and the priest cast a longing look at it and expired.

The king with the plum in his hand left the room signing the harlot to follow him ; when they entered the hall of private interview, his majesty asked her to explain the mystery. The woman begged him to break the plum. The king did so and to his utter astonishment found a big red vermin inside the fruit eating upon the kernel. Before he had time to recover from his surprise and question the harlot, she began ; " Sire ! your priest, as I said, did not actually know how to die. At his last moment, he longed to taste this trifling plum, and had thus his fleeting spirit confined after death in the fruit in the form of this insect. Had he known how and what to think of when dying, he could have soared higher above all earthly things."

His majesty was very much pleased to find such spiritual advancement in a fallen woman. He dismissed her with handsome presents, and from that day forward he began to practise how to die a better death.

XVIII. THE DERVISH AND HIS RECIPE.

ONCE there lived in Northern India a young Moslem king, who unfortunately was impotent. He passed his days in bitter grief as he had no prospect of getting a son and heir. The charming sight of the beauteous bevy of ladies in the harem only augmented his grief the more. Hindu physicians and Mahommadan Hakims did their best, but failed to cure the malady.

One day a Dervish came to his capital with specifics for all incurable diseases. A ray of hope dawned upon his sad and gloomy mind. He hurried to the Dervish *incognito* as his malady was known to a few only within the Palace walls. The *Faquir* having heard, what ailed the king, produced a small phial of an elixir, drank three-fourths of its shining contents himself, and made over the rest to him with instructions to use it for three days successively in the morning in equal doses, and guaranteed a thorough cure. The

king thanked the Dervish and left him. He took the first dose the next morning—it produced symptoms of success. The second dose brought him back to his normal state ; and the third inflamed his hitherto dormant passion.

The joy of the king knew no bounds. But now that his peace of mind was restored, he got time to think of the extraordinary powers of the *Faquir* in freely consuming the three-fourths of the elixir at a time, one-fourth of which taken in three days, had kindled his passion to such an extent. He became anxious to learn the mystery and went to the *Faquir*. After the necessary exchange of *Salams* the king addressed the *Faquir* :—"Father ! I do not know how to thank you for the cure of my disease, your elixir has marvellous powers. I am here not only to thank you for my cure, but to have a doubt removed from my mind. You drank three-fourths of the elixir at a time and gave me only one-fourth of it for three days' use. I know well how it worked in me, and I wonder how you, a holy saint, could after taking so much of the liquid at a time, bear its effect without being excited." The Dervish remained silent for a few minutes, and then

replied solemnly : "Sire ! I will satisfy your curiosity to-morrow, if you live till that time. Now the first thing I should do is to make an attempt to save your life which is about to be extinguished. I know a bit of occultism and can say what you are and that your days are numbered. By the rising of to-morrow's sun you are destined to die. However, I shall try and see if there be any chance yet of saving you. So saying he took another phial of his elixir and poured its contents to the last drop down his throat. The king mechanically swallowed it all. A mortal terror shook his whole frame. He gasped for breath and tried to ask further questions, but failed. The Dervish asking him to go home, disappeared into his hut.

The king dragged himself home with much difficulty as his legs were quite unwilling to perform their functions. He entered his Seraglio. Many a smiling face stood round him, and embraced him lovingly, but he took no notice of them ; their appearance rather pained his aching heart the more. He was absorbed in one painful thought, and that of an imminent death. He spoke not a word, went straight off to his bed.


chamber, commanding no visit till called for, shut the doors, and attempted to sleep to forget the pangs of death. But alas ! the goddess of Sleep made herself scarce that night, she quite forgot to visit the royal chamber. The king rolled in his bed to and fro. The soft downy bed felt, as if, made of thorns. The terror of death gnawed the very marrow of his bones. The night appeared a dismal one. The striking of the hours and half hours from the royal tower clock seemed to him to be the tolling of his own death-knell ! With the waxing of the night the agony of his death increased. At last the king fell into a stupor, and lay unconscious. When he awoke or rather came to his senses, he saw the sun's rays penetrating into his chamber by the window crevices. The sun was up and he lived to see it. Oh ! what unspeakable joy he felt ! His face brightened. He thought he had a new lease of life, and hastened to the *Faquir* whom he took to be his saviour.

The Dervish, who sat in the *varanda* of his hut, seeing his majesty approach, smiled and asked : " Sire ! how did you enjoy your Begams last night ? " " Enjoyed the Begams ! ", replied the king astonished, " I who had to die this morning ? "

“I knew well you would not die so soon, Sire !” said the *Faquir* calmly, “but I so frightened you by way of giving a practical illustration in answer to your question as to why I was not upset by taking almost the whole of the elixir, a few drops of which maddened you so much. Now you find that when the grim spectre of death dances before one’s mind, it shuts up all the doors of its chamber tight and close against all earthly desires. I made you drink a whole phial of the same elixir yesterday, to excite your lust, yet it failed to make the slightest effect in your mind as the terror of death had its sway over it. Your Majesty saw the phantom of death for one night only, whereas I have it dancing before my eyes every moment. How could I possibly indulge in other thoughts ? My life’s aim is to prepare myself for death and, for this, I welcome and cherish it at all times in my mind. Now depart in peace, but forget not this lesson.”

Saying this the Dervish bowed and disappeared.

XIX. THE WOUNDED PADSHA.

 **MOGUL** Emperor, while practising with his sword one day, happened to wound his arm. The sycophant courtiers who were there, expressed their deepest regret and even shed crocodile tears for the slight injury of their royal master. But the Vizir who was also there, kept silent till the courtiers finished their condolence. Then he said : "Sire ! it is a sad thing indeed to see the arm of an Emperor bleeding, but I congratulate your Majesty on it instead of being sorry, because I believe that whatever happens to a person, even death itself, is always for his good only. Who knows that the cut might not, some day, turn to the benefit of your Majesty ? The faculty of prevision is denied to us and we fail to take a glimpse of the future. Be sure, Sire, that the wound is undoubtedly for your benefit." The Emperor did not relish the logic of his Vizir's argument. He rather got a little annoyed and left the place without speaking a word in reply. The wound being a slight one he cared not much for it.

On the next morning the Emperor to test the sincerity of the Vizir's belief in his theory and to prove its hollowness to him, went out hunting with him. They rode into a dense forest and bagged several games. At last they chased after a deer, and ran deeper into the *jungle* leaving their followers behind, but could not overtake the animal which disappeared in one of the secluded recesses of the vast wilderness. The fatigued horsemen now losing sight of their game reined up their horses and dismounted by the side of a well to take rest. No sooner was the Vizir seated there than the Emperor suddenly pushed him down into the well saying: "Vizir! whatever happens to a man it is always for his good." He then mounted his steed and rode off for the capital. But he had not proceeded far when two black figures stout and stalwart with poisoned arrows on their bows drawn up to the ear and ready for the fatal shoot, emerged from the forest depth and stood in front of the horse. One of them thundered forth: "A step more and you are a dead man, get you down and follow us." The Emperor seeing resistance useless dismounted from his steed and had no choice left

but to obey the strangers. After an hour's journey they reached the yard of an ancient temple which stood in the most secluded part of the forest. There throwing the Padsha into a cell, the captors disappeared. The Emperor remained in the dark dungeon in extreme anxiety and suspense knowing not what was in store for him. Evening drew on, the forest wore a gloomy appearance, and the sylvan denizens raised terrific howlings which resounded from one end of it to the other and thrilled the beating heart of the mighty Monarch, now a captive. At midnight, the cell door was thrust open, and he was dragged out. It was pitch dark outside, the night being a new-moon one. He was made to bathe and was then conducted to a sacrificial altar. An earthen oil-lamp cast a dim light within the temple which made the place look more dismal. The Monarch now realized his dreadful position. The altar was that of the Goddess *Kali* ; and it being the new-moon night the devotees of the Goddess were to offer a human sacrifice, and he was the intended victim. He grew paler than death. The two black captors rudely placed him upon the altar, near which the slayer

calmly waited with the shining *Kharga* in his hand. The High priest performed the necessary rites, and as he was going to garland the monarch, he suddenly stopped and stared at the captors and exclaimed : "Fools ! you do not know how to select sacrifice ? See, you rascals, the man has a wound. You should have known that such a sacrifice is not acceptable to Mother *Kali*. Away with him, and get another quick before the day breaks." The servants bowed and left the place forthwith in search of another man. The Monarch's horse was then brought in and he was asked to mount and depart at once. But he was sworn not to reveal what he had seen and suffered there and was strictly warned that the influence of the secret worshippers being vast and extensive he would not be able to escape vengeance if he had betrayed them. The Monarch leaped into the saddle mechanically and galloped away and disappeared in the depth of the dark dense jungle. He struck his way towards the well in which he had thrust his Vizir, to see what had become of him. The night being dark and the way meandering the Monarch with much difficulty and trouble reached his destination at the dawn of day.

He found the Vizir in the well and took him out by means of his *Pagri* cloth. When the Vizir was safely landed the Monarch apologised for his cruel treatment and soothed him with soft words. He then revealed what had happened to him and how he had narrowly escaped death, and frankly admitted the truth of his theory, as it was the wound alone that had saved his life. The Vizir bowed and said that his Majesty needed no apology to his humble servant because in throwing him into the well he had rather unknowingly been the saviour of his life, for had he not been into the well, he would have been taken a captive along with his Majesty and would have surely fallen a victim to the sylvan Goddess, as his person was free from wound. The Padsha then returned to his capital with his Vizir, sadder but wiser.

XX. THE TWO RIVAL CHIEFTAINS.

IN the outlying region of the mighty Himalayas there reigned, in ancient times, two rival Chieftains, one old, and the other young. They were always at logger-heads and measured their swords on more than one occasion. To expand their territories they were perpetually seeking to dethrone each other. The younger chieftain being of a designing nature, at last, succeeded in gaining to his side the Commander of the old Chief's army, and was thus able to conquer, capture, and banish his rival with his wife and children from the kingdom.

The old Chieftain, being thus expelled from his realm, journeyed on, exposed to rain and the sun without shelter and without food. The tedious journey was intolerably painful to the delicate queen and her children, one of whom was a sucking babe. They had neither money nor men with them, and the queen who once kicked at the golden balls rolling at her feet, had now to walk for miles and miles, in ifatgue and with sore-feet with the poor infant

in her arms. The children cried for food but the parents had nothing to give them. The old Chieftain's heart bled at the sight, but there was no help for it. Providence, however, interposed in one way. The queen and her children being unaccustomed to fatigue, exposure, and privations were soon taken ill and died. The old Chief became frantic in grief and resolved to put an end to his miserable existence into the waters of the Manas Sarobar.*

To Manas Sarobar, therefore, the old Chief went and according to the custom of the time wrote down his wishes for the next rebirth on

* *Manas Sarobar* lit, *the Lake of mind* so called from *Manas* or mind of Brahma who created the lake. It lies in the Tibetan plateau to the north of the Himalayas, where the Brahmaputra and the Sindhu take their rise. This large body of water consists of beautiful twin lakes—Manas, and Raksal. The Kailas mountain—the sacred abode of Hara and Parvati, rises high to the north of this lake. Manas is of the shape of a jack fruit and Raksal is like a guava. Three rivers take their rise in the southern waters of Manas and run along the northern skirts of the Himalayan range. The water of Manas is blue and thousands of white celestial swans sporting in it day and night, augment its beauty. Mythology says that Brahma, riding on his Swan used to come daily to take his bath in Raksal, but being subsequently disgusted with the waters of the lake abandoned it and created Manas by its side. To increase its sanctity, he blessed it so, that persons bathing in the waters of Manas, would have all their sins washed off and, those dying in them would have their Manas or desires realised in future births.

the marble tablet there, jumped into the limpid waters of the lake and disappeared.

Here the young Chieftain having made a new conquest was all jubilant and spending his days happily. The only thing that troubled him was that he had no issue. He had performed many rites to propitiate the deities to get a son but with no effect. One day an ascetic gave him a piece of a root and vouched that the queen taking it, would shortly become a mother. The queen took it, conceived and in due course gave birth to a boy brilliant like unto the moon. There was a general rejoicing all over the realm. The child grew up and was placed under the tuition of eminent Pandits. Within a short time he became a master of all the *Sastras* much to the delight of his father.

Time rolled on and the prince grew a young man. But he died all on a sudden in his twenty-first year. The heavy shock broke the father's heart and his life became a burden. He made up his mind to die in the waters of Manas Sarobar. So abdicating his kingdom to his *Muntri* he went to the lake to put an end to his miserable existence.

As the chieftain went to write his last

wish on the tablet at the lake before taking the fatal plunge, his eyes met the signature of his deceased antagonist therein. With great curiosity he read the scribbling and to his utter surprise learnt that the dying wish of his rival had been to be re-born a son unto him and die in his twenty-first year. Such was the way in which he sought to aggrieve his enemy and to take vengeance.

So the young chieftain became easy in mind, as he now perfectly understood that his deceased son had been no other than the revengeful spirit of the late chieftain. He retraced his steps to the capital and began to reign again in peace.

XXI. THE PANDIT AND THE GOLDSMITH.

THE following story is an illustration of the fact as to why sometimes virtue obeys vice.

At the beginning of the *Kaliyug* there lived at a village in Bengal a Pandit and a goldsmith. The former was learned and religious, the latter, a skilled workman, but very crafty and cunning. Though their nature and position were so different yet, strange to say, they were fast friends.

The vast learning of the Pandit and the great ability of the goldsmith in turning out jewelleries of exquisite workmanship, not being appreciated by their villagers, they were obliged to leave home to try their luck elsewhere.

On they went for days together, up hill and down dale, till they reached Nepal. There the two friends hired a hut and lived together. The Pandit thought that unless he could gain admittance to the Raj-Darbar he had no chance of success. He, therefore, composed a *shloka* in Sanskrit and presented it to the king. The

elegance, sublimity, and originality of the verse secured for the Pandit a seat in the *Raj-shava* on a handsome salary. In a short time, the merits of the Pandit attracted special notice of the king, and he gained royal favours and became the head of the *Shava-Pandits*. With the elevation of his position in the court his income increased. But the goldsmith remained in the same state of indigence as before. The Pandit cast about for a means to provide for him, but did not, for a long time, succeed in hitting upon one that promised success. At last, an idea struck him and he asked the goldsmith to return home and to start a business there. The cunning smith gladly agreed and left for home with ample capital supplied by his friend for the business.

In due course of time the goldsmith reached home, and started a business which flourished by leaps and bounds. On the goldsmith's asking for more funds to expand the business the Pandit readily made more remittances, amounting, in all, to a *lac* of Rupees. The firm flourished marvelously well and the smith amassed vast wealth. He raised a palatial building, bedecked his wife and children with

precious ornaments and drove in charriots-and-four. But he utterly neglected his friend's wife and child. The Pandit's old hut in the meantime dwindled down for want of repairs. His wife and his only child starved. But the wily smith kept his friend misinformed of all these facts. As in those days, postal communications were unknown, the poor wife of the Brahman could not communicate her grievances to her husband.

Days lapsed together. The Pandit grew anxious to return home. But the king would not part with him. With much difficulty, however, he obtained leave and came home. On reaching his village, he was quite surprised to see the wretched condition of his hut and that of his wife and his child. The former was reduced to a mere rotten framework of bamboos with almost no covering to it, and the latter looked like two living skeletons clad in rags. His heart bled at the sight and he stood aghast. Then not exchanging a word either with his wife or with his boy, he frantically ran towards the house of the goldsmith. But lo ! what met his eyes ! There in the old site of the smith's hut stood a big mansion, the gate of

which was kept by two stalwart upcountry Darwans. The Brahman in sheer indignation and impatience made a mad rush to enter the house, but was rudely kept back by the gatekeepers. He, however, made a desperate effort again and tore himself off from the hands of the keepers and ran towards a well furnished hall where sat the goldsmith surrounded by his *mosahibs*. As soon as the Pandit met his so called friend, he exclaimed : "Thou hast ruined me, friend !" Not giving him time to speak another word, the goldsmith thundered forth : "Stand back, fool ! who art thou ?" And he ordered a servant to turn him out not forgetting to reprimand him for his permitting the intruder to come into the house. The order was promptly carried out and the poor Pandit was forthwith ejected.

The Pandit's rage and grief knew no bounds. He went straight away with his boy to the reigning Sovereign at Hastinapur and laid his case before his Majesty. As he had no witnesses to prove his case, he prayed to be permitted to take the oath on the head of his boy, so that if it were false, the boy would die. Oaths, in those days, were held in solemn regard

and the sovereign granted the Pandit's prayer. The goldsmith was summoned and a day was fixed for the trial.

On the appointed day people began to pour in from far and near to see this extraordinary trial and the Darbar-hall was crowded to suffocation. The king entered the hall and took his seat. The goldsmith was brought in and the charge against him was explained, but he denied it entirely. The Pandit was then asked to take his oath and to prove his case against the goldsmith. Up rose the Brahman and all eyes were fixed on him. A piece of copper, a leaf of *Tulsi* plant and a few drops of Ganges water were placed in his hands. Touching his child he looked up to heaven and said : "I do hereby solemnly declare by the name of Narayan that I did actually pay a *lac* of Rupees to the goldsmith and that he has deceived me of it, and if what I say be untrue let this my only boy die instantly." No sooner was this uttered than the Brahman's child dropped down dead. He stood petrified. The Sovereign censured him and left the hall. The sightseers abused him and threw dust on him. He wanted the earth to open and

swallow him. The goldsmith won the day and went home triumphant.

In bitter grief and shame the Pandit hid his face and left the hall. He ran on frantically till he reached a river where he stopped and thought of putting an end to his miserable existence by drowning himself. As he was just going to jump down into the rapid current of the stream, he heard behind him clattering of horse's hoofs and with it a loud voice calling out : " Hold back, fool ! Hold back." He turned back his head and to his utter surprise saw a colossal dark figure in black uniform armed cap-a-pié riding fast on a sable steed advancing towards him. In the twinkling of an eye the horseman approached and thundered forth to the Pandit : " Fool ! why art thou bent upon thy destruction ? can'st thou not hope for better days yet ? Hark unto me and do my bidding. Knowest not thou that the age thou livest in is *Kaliyug* ? Carry out *Kali Raja's* behest and you will be happy, for on telling the truth thou hast lost thy boy. Go back to the sovereign and tell him that thou hast given two *lacs* of Rupees to the goldsmith and thy dead child will revive. Fail not to do what I say. I

follow thee unseen. See in me the *Kali Raja*." Saying this the black god vanished. The Pandit now found that even death refused him shelter. He was not at all willing to go back to the sovereign, but he was afraid to disobey the god's mandate.

He went back to Hastinapur and with great difficulty persuaded the sovereign to hold a *de novo* trial of his case. A day was appointed and the goldsmith was brought in, but he again denied owing any money to the Pandit. The Brahman took the same oath as before and said that as he had made a mistake last time in stating the correct amount of the money advanced so his son had died ; but now that he declared the right sum of two *lacs* of Rupees to be his due, his dead boy would be alive. No sooner was this said than up stood the child. There was a general rejoicing. The goldsmith was banished beyond the Himalayas and the Pandit was installed in his mansion.

In the night of the Pandit's installation the goddess Virtue appeared unto him in her white flowing garb and whispered : " Unfortunate man ! I pity thee. Thou hast sold thyself body and soul to the *Kali Raja* for transient

earthly happiness. Thou shalt have to repent bitterly for it as thy eternal future is marred."

XXII. THE SIGNET RING.

TODAR MALL, the most trusted Minister of Akbar Sha, the great Mogul Emperor of India, was the custodian of his signet ring. The tradition connected with the ring is well known to many. It possessed charms and could make or unmake a king.

One summer morn Todar Mall went to take his bath in a river with this ring on his finger ; while washing himself the ring accidentally slipped off and disappeared into the water. The Minister quaked with terror. He dreaded the consequences and was afraid of losing his head as punishment. While thus in consternation, lo ! up rose the ring suddenly on the surface of the water. Todar mechanically picked it up. His joy knew no bounds. But at the next moment a mortal terror shook his whole frame as he was under the belief that such an abrupt turn of good luck was surely to be followed by a dire catastrophe in no time, and that sorrow, invariably comes after excessive joy. So he returned home in a melancholy mood.

No sooner had he reached home than a posse of the Emperor's men appeared with a writ of his arrest. He was seized and thrown into prison. But here his misfortune did not end. The prison diet allowed him was utterly inhuman. He was given only half a seer of unhusked paddy and a little salt and was ordered to strip each grain of the paddy with his finger nails. The rice thus obtained was his day's food.

A few days passed in this way. One evening, the minister having prepared his hard earned meal, when about to partake of it, the jailer appeared and informed him that his son waited at the jail yard to see him. The prisoner left his meal and hastened to his son. They met, fell on each others neck and wept bitterly. After the interview was over, the hungry minister returned to his cell to take his food. But lo ! to his misfortune, the jailor's mastiff had finished it clean off the iron plate. Todar wept silently and fell down struck with hunger and grief. However, he soon recovered, as a ray of hope brightened his gloomy heart. He believed that his misfortune had reached its zenith, and so it was sure to bring him a good

luck. Thus his heart became light and he patiently waited for better days.

He had not to wait long. While thus thinking, the cell door opened and the jailor appeared and asked him to see His Majesty who was waiting outside. He hastened out and was embraced by the Emperor, who made an ample apology for his ill treatment. The minister then related the incident of the loss and miraculous recovery of the signet ring and that of the prison diet being devoured by a dog and asked him not to think any more of what he did in a hasty moment. The sufferings he had undergone were, he said, the fruits of his own *Karma* (action) and that His Majesty was an instrument only.

The Emperor and the minister then left the prison together.

XXIII. THE FATE.

It was mid-night. An earthen lamp shed its dim light within a low built thatched hut at a certain village in Lower Bengal. The occupants, a young Brahman and his youthful wife, were locked in the fond arms of profound slumber. With sudden start the husband awoke and saw a straw falling down from the thatch. No sooner had the straw touched the floor than it turned into a Cobra-de-capello and in the twinkling of an eye stung the sleeping wife, who muttered a groan and expired. The Brahman could not believe his senses in what he saw and remained stupified for a few minutes. But as the mysterious reptile was making its way out of the hut, he followed it to know more about it, leaving the cremation of his wife to be performed by his relations.

After going a few yards off the Brahman's house the snake turned into a jackal and bit a boy who happened to be outside his house. The boy instantly died. It then made its way out of that village and entered another. The

Brahman followed it unseen. It was now day-break. The animal took the shape of a dog and bit and despatched some persons of that village. It then rushed towards the high-road, the Brahman still pursuing it. On the road it transformed itself into a bull and gored to death some of the pedestrians and went onward. It stopped under the shade of a banian tree and took the shape of a beautiful damsel of sixteen, and sat there with a melancholy face, but displaying her beauty to its best advantage.

It so happened at the time, that two Rajput brothers were striking the same road on their way home after a long military service in a Raj-estate. My tale relates to the pre-Railway days. The two brothers were going on foot and were armed to the teeth, as in those days *Dacoits* and *Thugs* were not uncommon.

The fascinating beauty of the solitary girl attracted the attention of the travellers. They drew near and asked her, as to who and what she was and why she was alone there. The girl bent down her bashful face and murmured in a low voice: "Pray Sirs! one of you get

me a glass of water first before I can reply to your queries, I am dying of thirst."

The elder at once hastened with his *Lota* to get water, leaving the damsel with his younger brother. In a few minutes he returned, and to his utter astonishment found the girl beating her breast, tearing her hair and crying in extreme rage. He was perplexed and asked what had up-set her so shortly. She stood erect, drew up to her full height, and stared furiously at the younger soldier. The blue veins of her face and neck swelled with rage. She looked like a furious tigress and stamping her foot replied : "My noble deliverer ! this cowardly wretch of a soldier wanted to dishonour me ; I, who delivered myself unto you at the very first sight, asked him not to touch me, but the brute used force against me, an unprotected and helpless woman " ; and she again burst into tears. The blood of the elder brother rushed up all at once and in sudden passion he drew out his sword and challenged his brother to fight for his misconduct.

Though the younger brother knew perfectly well that every word of his accuser was

false and that his elder was labouring under a gross misapprehension, he cared not to wait and explain matters, as none but a coward Rajput would delay the measuring of his sword with any body when challenged to a fight. The Rajputs, in those days, had very odd and curious customs of challenging. The twisting up of the mustaches was one of the oddities. The readers will kindly allow me the digression to relate a story by way of illustration : A Rajput once went on an invitation to a friend and when talking together he involuntarily twisted up his whiskers. The host took it to be a positive challenge to a fight, went in to prepare himself for the duel and killed his wife and children to save them from disgrace in case he should die, and returned to his friend with a drawn sword. The guest was quite astonished at the sudden change of attitude of his friend, but shortly found out that the careless twisting up of his mustaches was the cause. He soon brushed the whiskers down with his hands and the friend triumphantly laid aside his weapons. But the gallant soldier had already done the irreparable mischief to his family at the time of preparing himself for the

fight ; nevertheless he was in all glee over his so-called victory and did not lament the loss at that moment.

But to return to the story. No sooner was the young soldier challenged, than, quick as lightning, flashed his sword from its sheath. He asked his elder brother to defend himself. Their swords crossed and both being good swordsmen, they fought furiously. But the loss of blood from their wounds exhausted them so, that they both sank down and expire !.

The mysterious damsel who had been laughing all this time in her sleeves, now stood up and made her way towards the dense forest that lay near the road. But the Brahman rushed towards her hastily and said : "Mystic ! for so you are, I followed you and watched your dark deeds since you killed my wife last night. Now tell me, who and what you are ? I will not allow you to part thus."

The girl turned back, looked hard at the Brahman and replied : "It is impossible. Leave me at once. Dare not cross my way," and quickened her pace. The desperate Brahman came up with her again and pressed her for a reply. The irate girl vociferated :

“Leave me, if you care for life.”

“Life?” calmly replied the Brahman, “I carry it in my hand, and care for it as little as for the dust under my feet.”

Seeing the Brahman resolute and desperate, the girl smiled and said :

“I am the goddess Fate. To fulfill my mission I did what you call dark deeds.”

The Brahman stood silent for a moment in astonishment. But as he became curious of his own destiny, he again questioned her :

“One word more and I’ll let you go.”

“What is it?” Asked the goddess.

“How, when and where shall I meet my death?”

“I can’t say.”

“You can, and you must say.”

“No, I cannot.”

“Then I’ll destroy myself in your presence and you would be its cause.”

“No, you can’t, the date is yet far off.”

“Oh ! then you know it, and must tell it to me.”

The goddess seeing it was useless bandying words with the desperate Brahman replied :
“At the age of sixty in the river Ganges

you shall be swallowed up by a crocodile," and she vanished.

The Brahman stood aghast to learn his sad destiny. He did not return home as it stood on the bank of the Ganges ; but went on and on for months together to the opposite direction till he reached a village where even the name of the Ganges was known to few only. He took his abode there in the house of a zemindar.

The zemindar was rich but had no son. A few months after the Brahman's advent he got a boy. When the child grew up he was put under the tuition of the Brahman as he was a good Sanskrit scholar. Gradually the boy grew fond of his tutor to such an extent that he would not leave him on any account. He ate and he slept with him. The Brahman was held in high regard by the family as shortly after his arrival at the house, the master was blessed with a boy. A few years passed on. The boy grew up to a young man and his tutor became old.

Now the famous *yog*, *Goninda dwadashi* drew nigh. Persons performing ablutions in the Ganges during the *yog* would have all their

sins, past and present, washed away. Crowds of persons set out on the pilgrimage. The zemindar also made up his mind to take a bath in the river with his family, on the occasion, leaving his house in charge of the Brahman. But the boy would not leave his tutor as he was so fond of him. The zemindar was consequently obliged to alter arrangements and asked the Brahman to accompany them. The Brahman grew pale at the request and was greatly embarrassed and knew not how to avoid it. Finding no means of escape he, at last, disclosed everything. To leave the boy at home was out of the question, as he being the only child of the zemindar's old age and the sole comfort of the family could, on no account, be left behind. But to induce the Brahman to accompany the party was a far more difficult task. He explained to the Brahman that if all his fears were only for the crocodile, he would have the bathing *ghat* protected with stout iron railings and strong wire-netting in which case possibly he could have no objection to accompany the party. The Brahman at last agreed.

On a fine morning the party started on the pilgrimage and in due course reached the

river. The *ghat* was safely protected. The Brahman was satisfied with the arrangements. Now, the hour of the *yog* arrived and the party went into the waters for their ablutions. The Brahman also went in with his pupil ; but no sooner had he dived than was caught between the jaws of a monstrous crocodile which jumped over the railings to free waters with the victim and disappeared. Before the Brahman was consigned to the capacious stomach of the crocodile, it whispered to him thus, "Old man ! your pupil is no other than the Fate himself, whom you met years ago. With all your precautions you could not avoid your destiny. The decree of Fate is inevitable. It is only on account of my telling your future before-hand, that I had to undergo the pains in a human womb." So saying the crocodile devoured the Brahman and plunged into the water.

The zemindar and the party returned home in extreme grief.

XXIV. THE BARBER AND THE GHOST.

IN the District of Burdwan, there lived a barber who was very idle. He would do no work, and devote all his time to his toilet which consisted only of an old looking-glass and a broken comb. His old mother constantly rebuked him for this, but with no effect. At last one day she got extremely annoyed and in a fit of anger struck him with a broom she was sweeping with, at the time. The young barber took this chastisement to heart and left home, determined not to return, unless he amassed wealth. He repaired to a distant forest, in order by prayer, in its deep silence, to move the gods to his help. But no sooner had he entered it than he met a Brahma-Daitya dancing before him. He became extremely frightened and knew not what to do. However, he soon took courage and devised a plan to discomfit the aerial being. With this purpose he too began to dance, and asked the Ghost : " Pray, why are you dancing, sir ? "

The Ghost laughed and replied in a deep sonorous voice. "You seem to be an arrant fool not to understand the reason. It is simply because I wish to make a sumptuous feast upon your delicate flesh, but, tell me what made *you* dance?"

"I have," retorted the barber, "far better reasons: our king's son is dangerously ill, the physicians have prescribed for his cure the heart's blood of 101 Brahma-Daityas and His Majesty has proclaimed by beat of drum to give away half of his kingdom and one of his beautiful daughters to any one who would be able to get the medicine. I have, with much difficulty, captured 100 ghosts and in you I make up the full number. I have seized you already and you are in my pocket." So saying he took out his pocket-mirror and held it before the Brahma-Daitya's eyes. The terrified Ghost found his image reflected in the glass by the clear moon light and thought himself actually captured. He trembled and prayed for his release. The barber did not agree at first, but on the Ghost's promising wealth worth seven kings' ransom he subsequently yielded and said: "Where is the wealth, and who is

to carry it and me home at this dead hour of night ? ”

“ The wealth ”, replied the Brahma-Daitya, “ is underneath yonder tree, I shall presently show it to you and carry you with it on my shoulders to your house in an instant, as you know we spirits have superhuman powers.”

Saying this, he uprooted the tree and brought out seven golden jars full of precious stones from under it. The poor barber was quite amazed at the sight of the enormous wealth, but as he was cunning he concealed his emotions and boldly ordered the Ghost to carry the jars and himself forthwith to his house. The Ghost obeyed, and in an instant the barber was safely carried home, with the wealth. The Ghost then prayed for his release, but the wily *Narasundar* not wishing to part with his services so soon, asked him to cut the paddy of his field and bring the crop home. The Ghost believing himself still under the clutches of the barber had no other means left but to agree, so he went out to reap the corn.

As he was cutting the paddy, a brother ghost happened to pass that way, and finding him thus employed, asked for the reason. The

Brahma-Daitya replied that he had accidentally fallen into the hands of a shrewd man and that there was no means of his escape unless he reaped the paddy. The other ghost laughed and said : " Have you gone mad, my friend ! We, ghosts, are beings superior to men and are more powerful. How is it possible that a mortal would have any power over us ? Can you show me the house of your captor ?

" I can," replied the Brahma-Daitya, " but from a distance as I do not venture to go near it till I have reaped the paddy." They then both left for the barber's house.

Meanwhile the barber having obtained so much wealth had purchased a big fish to give a treat to his friends, but unfortunately a cat having entered the kitchen through a broken window had eaten up a good portion of it. The barber's wife was awfully angry and wanted to kill the animal, but it escaped. Expecting a return, as the cats generally do on such an occasion, she stood concealed with a fish-knife in hand by the side of the window. Now the Brahma-Daitya having shown the house of the barber to his friend from a distance went back to the field. The other ghost was approaching

stealthily towards the house to have a look at his friend's captor. Coming near the kitchen he thrust in his bushy head through the broken window by the side of which stood the irate wife expecting the return of the mischievous cat every moment. No sooner, therefore, was the head of the ghost pushed in than she struck a severe blow to it with her sharp knife causing a clean cut of the tip of his nose. In pain and fright the ghost ran straight away, ashamed of meeting his friend with a disfigured face.

The Brahma-Dutya after having reaped the paddy got his release. The wily barber this time, presented the back of his mirror before the Ghost, who, not finding his image in it, was satisfied of his release and went home merrily.

XXV. NARAYAN OUTWITTED.

ONCE there lived in Bengal, a Brahman, who was childless. As, according to the *shastras*, a man must rot in hell, named *Put*, unless he begets a son, the Brahman was in great anxiety for his future lot. Having performed many rites to have a son with no effect, he, at last, made up his mind to repair to a secluded place and pass his days in devotion to propitiate the gods that he might be blessed with a boy. Accordingly he left home and went to a remote recess of the mighty Himalayas and put himself there in deep meditation. His fervent prayers, at last, reached heaven and Narayan appeared and asked him what he wanted. The Brahman begged of a son. "A son thou canst not have," replied Narayan, "as it is not thy lot to be a father ; ask for some thing else."

As the Brahman would not have any thing but a son, the God vanished. The Brahman again fell into prayer with more zeal ; the kind God appeared again, and the Brahman repeating the same boon, He pleaded inability and disappeared. Finding that the God was determined

not to bestow on him a son, the Brahman hit upon a plan to outwit him. Therefore, he began praying for the third time, and the merciful God appeared again. He prayed this time that his merriments be shared by men and gods alike, with him. Finding no impropriety, then in the request, Narayan readily granted it and ascended up to heaven.

The Brahman returned home and told his wife all that had happened and about his plan. Early next morning they took a hearty meal, shut themselves up in their hut and indulged in wild dancing. No sooner had they begun the dance than the gods above and the men below mechanically joined in the merriment. All began to dance, and business came to a standstill in heaven as on earth and only dancing went on. None knew the reason of this universal disorder. All were astonished. A general confusion ensued. It was midday, but still the universal mechanical dancing ceased not. The gods failing to find out the reason proceeded to Narayan dancing all the way. They reached Golak Dham and to their surprise found Narayan and his consort Lakshmi dancing as well.

Now, a divine conference was held and it was found out that a Brahman on earth was abusing the boon granted to him by Narayan: So, with Narayan at their head, the gods descended and went dancing all the way to the Brahman's house, who, perceiving their approach through a crevice of his broken door, increased his dancing and took bigger leaps and bounds than before. The gods had to do the same and their heads knocked again and again, against the low thatches of the Brahman's hut and got bruised and bled. The old scalp of the ancient Brahma was awfully lacerated. But there was no help. It became now the turn of the gods to propitiate the Brahman to bring back order and peace into the creation. They requested him to stop his dancing and to come out. The Brahman would not agree unless and until the promise of a son was made. The gods finding no other means of getting over the fearful confusion in the creation had to yield to the Brahman's demand. So ceased the dancing, and peace and order were restored once more in heaven and on earth. In due course of time a son was born unto the Brahman, and he lived in peace ever after.

XXVI. THE KING AND THE JACKAL.

HERE once lived in Guzrat a prince who had a very beautiful wife. He was so much fond of his spouse that the people used to call him an effeminate husband. The prince had learnt from a Sadhu (Saint) the art to understand the languages of the lower order of animals.

One morning, while they were strolling in the palace garden, the prince's attention was drawn to the cawings of a Jackdaw and its mate, and he smiled. The hen-daw was lamenting her fate and telling her husband that if she were a queen how happily she would have walked by his royal side like the princess before them. The male consoled her by saying that they might attain that stage of life in some of their future re-births but that now they should be content with their present position. The queen having observed the king smiling at the cawings of the crows asked him for the reason. The prince, in reply, regretted his inability to comply with her request, and said that if he would

divulge the secret he would die instantly, because the holy saint who initiated him into the art of understanding the languages of the brute creation, warned him, on pain of death, never to disclose what he would hear from them. The queen grew persistent, however, though she was told how very fatal it was to her husband to comply with her wishes. The prince tried again and again to convince her that to satisfy her curiosity, he would have to sacrifice his life. But the foolish queen still persisted. The king being uxorious had, therefore, no choice left but to yield, and he asked the queen to accompany him to the sea-side as he wished to die in its waters, for die he must, after the disclosure*. The queen agreed. While standing in neck-deep of water, the king was about to make the revelation, the conversation between a Jackal and his mate attracted his attention. The she-Jackal seeing a corpse floating in the sea asked her husband to get it for her. The latter got angry, and rebuked her thus : "You foolish creature ! to satisfy your

* The Hindus consider it a curse to die in the house. When in point of death they are generally removed to the river or the sea-side as is convenient.

greed 'I can't risk my life in the boisterous waters of the sea. I am not a fool like that effeminate king, who is going to sacrifice his valuable life only to satisfy his wife's idle curiosity." Saying this he struck his consort with his right forepaw and went away.

The king got a lesson from the Jackal. He came out of the water, censured his wife for her heartlessness and sent her in exile.

XXVII. KING VIKRAMADITYA AND GOD SANI.*

DURING the reign of the pious king Vikramaditya there lived in Ujjaini a Brahman who had the misfortune of falling under the wrath of *Sani*. He suffered long and much. *Sani* did his best to make his malignant influence felt keenly by the unfortunate Brahman. His house was burnt down, his wealth was robbed and he was even separated from his dear wife and children. The Brahman was reduced to such a wretched plight that even the iron hearted *Sani*, at last, felt pity for him. The dreadful god relented and appeared unto him one night in dream and said:—"Poor man! I feel for thee, thou hast suffered much, and the time has come when I should leave thee, provided thou canst make an iron image of myself and sell it for Rupees 1,001 and with it make propitiating offerings to me," and then vanished. The Brahman awoke, bewildered and confused.

* *Sani* or Saturn is a planetary god of evil propensities in the Hindu mythology.

He asked himself: "Do I hear aright? Are my sufferings to come to an end? Do better days await me? Was it really the relentless *Sani* who spoke to me? Has he, after all, actually taken pity upon me, or are all these mere effusions of my heated imagination?" He thought of the matter over and over again, and at last made up his mind to carry out the bidding of *Sani* though it was, no doubt, a very difficult task. But how to secure a purchaser for the image of the ireful god—the mere utterance of whose name creates terror in a man's mind—and specially one that would be willing to pay such a big sum for it, was the question that sorely troubled him. Like a drowning man who catches at a straw, he, however, did not abandon the idea and went on thinking of one plan after another till he hit upon the following:

The truthful king Vikramaditya had started a new market and to make it attractive he had declared by beat of drum that any unsold article of the new Bazar (market) after sunset would be purchased by the State at the price set by the vendors. The Brahman wanted to take advantage of the king's liberality. He got an image of *Sani* duly made, went with it to the

market and offered it for sale. The people at the Bazar took him to be a madcap for his tendering a likeness of *Sani* for sale at Rs. 1,001. But the Brahman patiently waited at the market from morning till evening to dispose of his curious commodity. None came forward. The sun went down and the night approached. All left the Bazar, except the Brahman and one or two other unfortunate vendors like him who waited the arrival of the king's market Jamadar for the disposal of their unsold articles. In due time the Jamadar came to the Brahman and asked him what article he had unsold and its price. On the Brahman's producing the image of *Sani* and asking Rs. 1,001 for it, the Jamadar was taken aback. But as he knew well that the king would never withdraw his declaration, he told out the money instantly and took the novel commodity to his Majesty. Vikramaditya on seeing the image, only thought for a moment and ordered it to be taken to the Thakurbari (Puja-houses) to be duly worshipped there with the other gods. The Brahman returned home in a merry mood and worshipped *Sani* with the price of his image and saw better days.

Now let us go to the palace to see how fared the king with the *Sani*. On the very night the grim god was installed in the Thakurbari, the Raj-Lakshmi (goddess of fortune) appeared unto his Majesty and addressed him : "Prince ! So long I had been living peacefully in thy house, but now as thou hast got *Sani* into it I must leave thee. Thou knowest well that *Sani* and myself are always at logger-heads and that we cannot, at any rate, put up in the same place.

The king bowed and replied : "Mother ! I have already apprehended this misfortune but to be true to my words I had to get *Sani* into my house, and when once he has been introduced into it I cannot do away with him. I must not fail in virtue though I be reduced to a beggar of the street. Pray, consider this and do what you think best." The goddess mournfully shook her head and melted into the thin air. No sooner had Lakshmi gone than Narayan appeared and said that as his consort had left, he could not, with propriety, stay in the palace any longer, and went away. The other gods and goddesses of the palace one by one thus took leave of the king. Last

of all, came the god *Dharma* (Virtue) and asked his Majesty's leave to be off. The king with tears in his eyes fell at his feet and prayed thus : "Dharma Raj ! thou canst not leave me thus, thou must stay to keep the fair fame of thy name. Thou knowest full well what led me to get *Sani* into my house and to part with Lakshmi, Narayan, and the other gods and goddesses. I have risked all this only for thy sake and to have thee at my side. Now it is for thee to decide how thou shouldst act."

Dharma meditated a little and said "Yes I can't leave thee" and went slowly back to his place in the house.

Here all the gods and goddesses having left the palace had been wandering all over the country to find out a suitable house to dwell in. But not finding Dharma-Raj any where they could not select one. Gods can not live in a house where Dharma does not reside. The morning was drawing nigh and there was no time to lose as they could not expose themselves to mortal gaze. They hastened back to see if Dharma had been lagging behind in the palace and found him there, but with all their persuasions failed to induce him to

leave it. And as they could not live without Dharma they were obliged to re-settle in the palace of Vikramaditya.

On the next night god *Sani* appeared to the king, in a milder mood and addressed him thus :
"Oh virtuous Vikramaditya ! I am very much pleased with thy truthfulness and the strength of thy mind, thou hast stood thy trial well. I give thee my word that henceforth the wrath of *Sani* will never fall upon thee or any of thy progeny." So saying he disappeared.

XXVIII. BIDHATA* OUTWITTED.

HERE was a general rejoicing all over the kingdom of Magadh, as a boy was born unto the king ; *Nautches*, *Tamashas* and merry-making went on to almost all the thoroughfares and public squares of the town and its suburbs. The old minister alone was despondent and did not join in these festivities as he was anxious to know the future destiny of the royal babe. At last he hit upon a plan to effect his purpose. In the sixth night after the birth, as the Bidhata would come to inscribe the future destiny of the infant on its skull, he would avail himself of the opportunity to get the information from Bidhata direct. The expected night approached and he sat with his legs stretched out on the threshold of the room in which the queen lay confined, awaiting the arrival of the Writer of destinies.

* *Bidhata* or *Bidhata Purusha* is a deity in Hindu mythology, whose duty is to ascertain the destiny of a newborn babe and inscribe it in hieroglyphics on its forehead in the sixth night after the birth.

At midnight when the world was plunged in solemn stillness and the people of the palace were deep asleep, a tall figure clothed in all white was seen stealthily approaching the lying-in-room. He came near the door kept by the minister and asked him how he dared cross his path, and to move away. The minister knowing him to be the Bidhata replied : "Dev ! excuse me, I can't, unless and until you have promised to tell me what you would write on the boy's forehead."

"It is impossible," retorted the god angrily, "clear out, or sit there at your risk."

"I have enjoyed life for sixty long years," muttered the minister, "and can now well afford to spare the rest of it if you so wish. I will not move an inch."

Seeing the minister resolute and desperate, and being afraid lest the people of the palace should awake, Bidhata agreed and was allowed to go in.

After a few minutes the god came out and told the minister that the birth of the babe being in an evil moment, it would lose its parents at the age of fifteen and the kingdom would change hands ; and that the boy would have

to earn his livelihood by hunting stags. So saying, he vanished. The minister went away in a melancholy mood. He, however, kept the secret to himself and watched the progress of time.

Just at the age of fifteen the prince lost his father and his mother and the kingdom fell into the hands of a rival king, who turned him out.

The prince, now an orphan, was thus thrown adrift in the wide world alone and helpless. As he had no means to keep his body and soul together, he repaired to a *jungle* and lived upon hunting stags. The minister who had been watching the prince all along now came to his rescue, with a plan duly devised to outwit the Bidhata. He disclosed everything to the prince that he had heard from Bidhata concerning his destiny but assured him that there was still some chance of reversing the god's decree, if he would strictly follow his instructions. The prince readily consented. The minister asked him not to go into the forest any more for stags, but to wait for them at the outskirts of the town patiently, and even to starve for one or two days in case of failure.

With this instruction he left him promising to return within a fortnight.

On the next morning the prince went out of the town with his bow and arrows and stood at its frontier in wait for deer. He watched from morning till evening, but unfortunately no game turned up. He returned home disappointed and had to starve that night. The next day's adventure was as unsuccessful and he starved again. He was sorely disgusted and did not understand what the old counsellor meant by this hard ordeal. However, he obeyed his orders and on the next day went out hunting as usual. This day he met a deer, killed and sold it at the market and lived on the amount it fetched.

Thenceforward he bagged a deer every day during the rest of the fortnight, without going into the forest. After the expiry of the fortnight, the minister returned to see the prince, who told him all about the hardships and privations he had undergone and of his subsequent success. The minister now asked him not to leave his hut for stags, but to wait at the door, and he left with a promise to see him again after a fortnight. The prince did as he was bid. But

no stag turned up at the door for three days successively and the prince had to starve all this time. The trial was harder this time, but he patiently bore it. At last, on the fourth day a stag ran up to his door, as if God-sent, and he killed and sold it and lived on its price. Now he got a deer every day at his door for the rest of the fortnight, after which the minister came again to see him. He asked the prince this time to shut himself up in his hut and wait for stags within doors, and left with a promise to return after a fortnight as before. The prince carried out the minister's bidding. But the trial this time was very hard. No stag appeared for about a week and the prince had to fast all the time and was almost on the point of death. At last, however, one morning the door was forced open and a big deer rushed in. The prince with much difficulty handled his bow and shot it. A fortnight passed thus and the prince got a stag daily within his hut.

The Bidhata now fell into an awful fix. He had to bring stags daily into the prince's hut, and he became sorely disgusted with the unpleasant task. One night he appeared unto

the old minister and said : " I have been well paid for my foolishness in revealing what I wrote on the prince's forehead. How long do you want me to supply stags into the prince's hut ? Spare me the trouble for goodness' sake."

The minister started and saw the very same figure standing before him whom he had met some years ago at the door of the deceased queen's chamber. He bowed and replied : " Dev ! your decree is fulfilled. Pray, now have mercy on the prince and restore him to his father's *Gadi* (throne).

The Bidhata relented and said : " I will, You go and see the usurper of the kingdom with the prince and leave the rest to me," and he disappeared.

Early next morning the minister taking the prince with him went straight off to the usurper who forthwith vacated the throne to the prince and left for his own kingdom.

The prince was now installed on his father's throne and the faithful counsellor got his old seat once more by the side of his new master.

XXIX. THE CRANE AND THE CROW. AS MINISTERS TO THE LION.

CERTAIN Brahman was returning home during the Durga Puja holidays from a distant country where he served as a priest to a king. He was alone, and his way lay through a dense forest. The orb of the day had just gone down the western horizon, having cast its crimson rays over the distant landscape. The evening was peeping in with her gray mantle. The vast forest before the priest wore a gloomy appearance. He must cross it, anxious naturally as he was, to meet his family after a year's separation. So he made up his mind and gathering up courage entered into the jungle uttering thrice the name of the protecting goddess "Durga," "Durga," "Durga." When he had crossed half of the forest he came face to face with its king—a gigantic Asiatic Lion. He was almost frightened out of his wits and stood like a statue fixing his eyes upon those of the animal, who also remained motionless at the spot where he was. The minister of

the Lion, a noble crane, who was close by, apprehended the impending danger to the priest, and to save his life readily devised a plan and addressed thus to his king: "Sire ! may I take the liberty of reminding your Majesty that to-day is the *Sraddha-Tithi* of your Majesty's royal father and as Providence has been graciously pleased to send a *Purohit* (priest) just standing there, I think his services may be availed of for the purpose." The Lion consenting, every preparation was made, the necessary rituals were all duly observed and the *Sraddha* was gone through in all its details to a satisfactory completion. Plenty of gold and silver ornaments that had once adorned the persons of the unfortunate men who had fallen victims to the Lion, were given to the priest as his *Dakshina* (remuneration). Thus, contrary to his expectations and naturally to his infinite delight, the priest returned home laden with the costly presents. He was received at the door by his wife and children who had been anxiously waiting there for his return.

The priest spent the holidays happily at home. In due time he left for his place of business and joined his service again. After

having worked there for another year, he obtained his usual leave during the Durga Puja festival and set out for home. He so timed his start as to reach the forest just on the very day he had been there the year before, that is, on the *Sraddha* day of the Lion's father. On entering the forest he met the *Pasuraj* and they both stood still for a few minutes eyeing each other ; it is said, that so long as a man's eyes remain fixed upon those of a beast-of-prey, it would not attack him. The priest waited anxiously for his noble patron the crane. But alas ! he was disappointed. The ministry had changed. A wily crow had taken the place of the good crane. The new minister who was not very far from his royal master no sooner saw his Majesty delaying, than said : " Sire ! does your Majesty forget the request of the queen for some soft flesh " ?

No sooner was this uttered than the king of the forest pounced upon the unfortunate avaricious priest and killed him on the spot. Then the Lion and his mate made a hearty meal of the victim, and after the royal banquet was over, the cunning crow applied himself with great alacrity to what remained of the carcass.

XXX. THE TWO FRIENDS.

AT a certain village in Bengal there once lived two friends, *Sat* and *Asat* ; the one being, as the names indicate, of good and the other of bad disposition. But though of different propensities, they were fast friends.

One evening, a Brahman was discoursing on the *Ramayana* at the house of the village landlord before a large gathering and *Sat* was going to attend it. He happened to meet *Asat* in the way and asked him to accompany him. But he refused and tauntingly replied : " I care very little for such idle prattles of an old fool, it is better that I should be usefully engaged in some other quarter and make myself merry there."

Thus ridiculing, he left and spent the night in eating and drinking in a house of ill fame. But *Sat* attended the holy lectures from the beginning to the end in a truly pious frame of mind, and many a time shed tears at the pathetic portions of the discourse. Thus he sat till late at night in hearing the sacred epic explained

with the sweet chanting of hymns by the Brahman, at intervals.

The two friends thus spent the night in quite opposite ways ; *Sat* in practice of virtue and *Asat* in that of vice. But the former when returning home after the sermon was over, unfortunately trod upon a stout thorn of a Bel tree which went so deep that he could not walk and had to be carried home ; while the latter on his way home from the house of ill-fame picked up a heavy purse of gold, that lay on his way. On hearing what had happened to his friend, he went to see him and found him lying in his bed, with excruciating pain. A mocking smile brightened up his face and he said "Friend ! you attended the sacred sermon last night and have had for your reward the tormenting prick of a thorn, but I who made myself merry in eating and drinking, got a purse of glittering gold. Now judge the merits of our actions by their respective fruits." Saying this, he took leave of his friend and went away.

Sat was confined to his bed for some days on account of his sore foot. When he was well, he left home in search of one who would be able

to explain why they had such opposite fruits of their actions.

One day while he was sitting by the side of a river and thinking upon his puzzle, an old Brahman happened to come there. On seeing *Sat* melancholy, he asked what troubled him. The appearance of the old man was so very prepossessing that he at once opened his mind to him and told him everything. The Brahman smiled and said : "On that unlucky night according to your past karma (actions) you merited the *shula** but your good actions of the present birth mitigated your punishment and the *shula* was commuted to a thorny prick. As regards your friend, his good, actions of past birth secured a crown for him, but his misdeeds of the present incarnation minimized his good luck to such an extent that he only got a purse of gold in lieu of the crown." Saying this, Narayan vanished, for the Brahman was no other than the god Narayan himself who had appeared only

* In ancient times, *shula* was a kind of instrument for torturing to death the culprits capitally punished. It was a stout long iron rod with a thin point at the top. The condemned person was made to sit on the top which penetrated into his body slowly and went out by the head, torturing him to painful death.

to remove the doubt of his devotee. *Sat's* peace of mind being restored once more he returned home in a merry mood.

XXXI. A KING IS NOT THE CREATURE OF MERE CHANCE.

THERE was great grief in the kingdom of Rajgarh. The king had died without leaving an heir to his throne. As was the custom, the ancient royal tusker was let loose to select the successor. In those days, the oldest elephant of the State, was the king-maker when the last happened to die heirless. The great elephant of our narrative with an empty golden *Howda* on his back roamed over the town with the attendants of the late king, following. In the rear and in front of the animal gathered an immense crowd, every one of whom was eagerly struggling to get ahead as there was no knowing upon whom the mantle of honor would fall. The elephant left the town and veered round towards the suburbs, the crowd following him. While passing through a field of cucumber, the animal met a peasant boy working there. He looked keenly at the boy's face for a moment and, as if, being inspired, ran towards him, and taking him by the trunk, put him into the

Howda on his back. No sooner was this done than the rustic boy was proclaimed a king. The royal band of musicians played a fitting tune and filled the air with sweet melodies. The golden State umbrella was stretched over the boy king's head and the elephant returned to the palace. The boy was duly crowned and was placed under the tuition of the eminent Pandits.

The shrewd minister wanted to take advantage of the boy king's minority and inexperience. He believed that for some time to come he would be the *de facto* ruler of the realm, as the rustic boy would take many years to be able to govern his kingdom. But alas ! he was mistaken. The boy showed marvellous tact and intelligence and in an incredibly short time proved himself thoroughly competent for the throne. The wonderful skill and the extraordinary keen intelligence which he displayed in the administration of justice and the performance of his royal duties startled even the old counsellors of the State, and extremely mortified the ambitious minister. The king perceived it and summoned him one day to his private chamber. When the minister appeared

he showed him a unique *Champa* flower of pure golden hue and asked him to trace its source on pain of death, only giving him the hint that he had picked up the flower from the bank of the river by the side of his capital. The minister bowed and left with a trembling heart. He went home, but could not sleep that night. Early next morning he engaged a boat and started on his journey up the river. After a week he began to find solitary flowers like the one in his possession here and there on the river. And as he proceeded further up he met more and gathered them. On he went for about a month collecting all the flowers that came in his way. At last he came to a rock in the middle of the river round which clustered lots of flowers. There he cast anchor and went up the hillock. And lo ! what met his eyes ? From a bough of an old banyan tree there hung a headless human body. Every drop of the blood that trickled down from it into a caldron of boiling *Ghee* (clarified butter) below, was immediately transformed into a beautiful *Champa* flower. The minister to his utter surprise found the head, which was just close to the tree, to be that of the juvenile king. He

staggered and leaned against the rock. · What was it that he saw ? His new king was undergoing such an austere penance and sacrificing his life's blood to the gods for a kingdom !

Now the truth flashed into his mind that a king was made not by mere chance but by his own previous actions (*Karma*), which he saw his new king was performing. He returned to the capital wiser and fell down at the feet of his sovereign telling him what he had seen. Thenceforward he became perfectly loyal and adored his king.

XXXII. A WORD IN TIME.

It was a fine moon-lit night. Dazzling floods of light illumined the palace-hall of the king Nara Nath. A dramatic performance was going on to a full house. Almost all the members of the Royal family, and the *elite* of the town had assembled there. The actors and players were doing their very best to please the audience, but unfortunately with no effect. The ill-wind of the night was determined, as it were, to blow away all the sweet music and melodies from the stage. After almost a whole night's hard work the players became hopelessly discouraged, and the Nati (Heroine) asked her partner's permission to close the play, as the night had advanced into the small hours of the morning. But the Nat (Hero) replied :—

“Gatá Bahutarà Kante Swalpà Tishthati Sarvari.
Iti Chitte Samádháya, Kuru Sajjana Ranjánam”*

* গতা বহুতরা কান্তে স্বল্পা তিষ্ঠতি সর্ব্বরী ।
ইতি চিত্তে সমাধায় কুরু সজ্জন রঞ্জনম্ ॥

The longer portion o'er, these shorter hours of night
Beguile my love ! with bold enduring spirit stand.

“Dear ! The night is almost gone, there remains only a small portion of it, consider this and despair not ; make another great effort to please the good people and look to the end.”

No sooner was this said than to the surprise of all present, out rushed the princess from behind the screen, and flung her diamond necklace to the Nat as a reward. The next moment the prince, as well, presented the Nat with his jewelled finger-ring. Before the audience had time to recover from the surprise, the Kotowal's son began to belabour his father with sound slaps and blows, but the father in high glee took the son upon his shoulder and began to dance. These sudden and successive puzzles put the whole assembly to their wit's end.

The king stopped the play and asked the princess first to explain her conduct. She bowed and replied : “Father dear ! the Nat's advice to “look to the end” saved my virtue. I had made up my mind to run away to-night as you delayed my marriage, but the Nat's good words worked a miracle in me and brought me

For know, that patience sees the dawn of glory's light,
And on proceed to please the listening noble band.

to my sense, and taught me to wait. I pray father, you will kindly pardon my candid confession." So saying, she withdrew.

The prince then being questioned replied : "Sire ! pardon me for making a clean breast of my evil design. I have grown up to be a young man, and as your Majesty was quite unmindful of my installation, I determined to kill you and seize the throne, but the Nat's wise words produced the same wholesome effect upon me, as they did upon my sister, and saved me from committing the heinous crime of patricide. So I rewarded the Nat with the most valuable thing I had at the time."

An explanation being demanded from the Town Kotowal's son, he bowed low and replied : "Sire ! as my father had neglected my education, I failed to understand the speeches of the Nat which moved the princess and her brother so much in admiration as to part with their costly valuables, and so I struck him". The Kotowal being called upon to account for his conduct replied. "My Leige ! An illiterate child is worse than a high-way murderer. As my worthy son spared my life and gave me only a few slaps and blows, I was joyous and danced in

delight." The king then called the Nat and he also gave him a handsome reward and dismissed him.

On the next day the king made arrangements for the princess' wedding, and the prince was installed on the throne. Nor did the kotowal lose any more time in sending his boy to school, though he was rather big for it.

XXXIII. SHIVA-RATRI. *

IT was the midnight preceding the new moon in the month of Falgun. A millionaire banker was returning from town to his country house, alone. His way lay through a vast *maidan* (meadow) in the centre of which stood an

* *Shiva Ratri* or *Shiva Chaturdashi* is a vow that comes off on the fourteenth night of the waning moon about the month of Falgun every year. As in most other vows, a pious Hindu is to fast on the occasion for the whole day and night, and worship the God Mahadev, particularly four times in as many *prahars* of the night. By observing this vow, it is said, a man avoids hell. The legend as to how the vow originated is briefly this : A falconer once went out catching birds in a forest. After bagging some games when returning home, he missed his way, and had to pass the night in the forest on a *Bel* tree. Beneath this tree there was a *Shiva-linga* (Emblem of God *Shiva*). The night being windy and rainy several sacred leaves of the tree and drops of rain fell of themselves on the idol. The ever-forgetful God. Bholanath believing that some one was worshipping him with the trefoil and the water from the tree, so blessed the fowler that he was taken to heaven after his death. This happened on the *Chaturdashi ratri* (fourteenth night of the waning moon) in the month of Falgun. Thenceforward that particular night has been considered sacred and observed by every pious Hindu. The holy cities of Benaras and Baidyanath present a most magnificent scene on the occasion every year. Hundreds of pilgrims flock to the places from all parts of India to worship at the shrines.

ancient temple of the God Shiva. When the banker neared the temple, he heard voices speaking inside it. As the temple door was fastened from outside, he was curious as to who the speakers could be. He drew close to the door put his ear against it, and heard the following conversation :

First voice :—Nandi ! My devotee Shivadas of this town has been piously observing the vow of *Shiva Chaturdashi* for some years together. He is very poor. I wish to give him wealth.

Second voice :—And wealth he shall have, Lord ! only let me know the amount.

First voice :—One lac of rupees, and to-morrow positively.

The voices then stopped and deep silence reigned once more within the solitary temple. It is needless to say that the conversation was between the God Shiva and his orderly Nandi.

The avaricious banker heard the dialogue and envied the good luck of the favored devotee. He resumed his journey, devising means how to cheat him the money, all the way. At home, during the dark hours of the night he matured his sinister plan.

Early next morning he hastened to Shiva-das. The poor Brahman dwelt in a small mud hut and lived by begging only. He was just starting for his day's errand when the banker reached his house and earnestly questioned him : "Thakur ! how much do your alms get you daily ? "

The Brahman looked confused, and asked the banker for his reasons. He replied that he would be only too glad to pay him a thousand rupees in return for that day's earnings. The poor beggar wondered at the mention of so enormous an amount, and was about to strike the bargain, when his wife, who was watching them from inside the house through the crevice of the old window, beckoned him. On some pretext the Brahman left the banker and went to her. She enquired about the stranger and his mission. The Brahman told her all. A shrewd woman, she at once understood that there was some mystery at the bottom, or else why should the stingy Shylock of a banker offer such a heavy sum for her husband's day's earnings which would not come up even to a rupee. So she asked her husband not to accept the banker's offer until it should come up to

fifty thousand rupees. The Brahman thus advised joined the banker again and refused the offer. Being afraid of losing the bargain, the banker went on increasing his offer till it reached fifty thousand rupees and the Brahman accepted it.

The bargain being secured the banker told down the money to the Brahman, and sent one of his trusted servants to watch him on his begging tour, while he himself waited at the hut. Slowly the day wore on, midday passed but still the Brahman did not return. In great anxiety and suspense the banker awaited his arrival. As the day drew to its close, his anxious expectation grew intense. At last the Brahman was seen coming, and straight away ran the banker like a hungry vulture darting upon its prey, and began to rummage his *jhola* (bag). But lo ! to his utter chagrin the banker found only about half a rupee worth of rice and some pieces of copper coin, in all not exceeding a rupee in value. He searched the *jhola* again and again, and looked into it carefully, but with no better result. His disappointment knew no bounds, and he was heartily mortified. He cursed, swore, and raved like a

mad man. In the height of his fury, he called the God Mahadev all sorts of names. Then in frantic rage he ran to the temple of Mahadev and kicked against its door and shouted : "Ye God ! Thou even art a liar." But lo to his utter surprise his foot stuck to the door as he kicked. He tried to extricate himself, but in vain. Thus he stood aghast on one leg in pain and fright. Shortly after he heard the voices of the previous night thus conversing within the temple.

Shiva :—Nandi ! Hast thou paid the money to Shivadas ?

Nandi :—Yes, Lord, but in half.

Shiva :—In half ! and why ?

Nandi :—The other half will be paid immediately, and the payer is at the temple door with his foot stuck to it, as the consequence of his act of sacrilege.

Nandi then narrated the history of the banker's episode. The God heard it and smiled. Nandi now ordered the banker to pay fifty thousand rupees more to the Brahman, if he wanted to have the free use of his leg again. Seeing no other means of escape he yielded and was liberated.

In the same night the banker paid Shiva-das the other half of the lac, and told him that the whole amount was a gift to him from the God Mohadeb for his pious observance of the vow of *Shiva-chaturdashi*.

XXXIV. THE KING AND HIS BARBER.

AN eastern prince had a beautiful daughter of marriageable age. The king, eminently pious as he was, determined that none but a *Sadhu* (Saint) should wed the pure virgin. One day while the barber was shaving him, and the minister stood there the king opened his mind to the latter, and asked him to secure a *Sadhu* husband for his daughter by some means. The minister bowed and went on his errand.

He travelled all over the country but failed to secure a bridgroom such as was wanted by his Majesty : for a *Sadhu* who had already bidden adieu to all worldly pleasures, could not be expected to put on the shackles of matrimony. As he was returning home disappointed, he saw a man at the outskirts of the town under a banyan tree. A big *Dhuni* (pile of fire) was burning before him. His body was besmeared all over with ashes, a string of *Rudrahksha** beads encircled his neck, and long

* A tree and its fruits. The fruits are like small beads, and are used in a rosary for counting prayers. They are also strung on a thread or wire and worn on neck and wrist by pious Brahmans and

twisted tawny locks flowed down all round his head. He sat on a tiger's skin and was in deep meditation. The minister wanted to try this man as his last chance. He drew near and stood before the ascetic but did not dare disturb his meditation. After a few minutes as the man opened his eyes the minister fell at his feet, but ere he could speak much of the match, the ascetic's face reddened, he flew into a rage and ordered him to leave his presence forthwith. The minister finding the fort impregnable sounded a hasty retreat.

He went to the king and told him all about his fruitless labour to find out a mare's nest, but he, however, advised the king himself to try the *Sadhu* whom he had seen under the banyan tree. His Majesty agreeing they left together

Sadhus. Five-mouthed Rudrakshas are considered very sacred and not easily available. The one-mouthed ones are rare and highly valued. The tradition says: A tree in the Nepal forest yields only three such fruits in the year: one goes to heaven, the other goes to the nether world (Patal) and the third finds its way to the temple of Pashupatinath in Nepal, and the God there being worshipped with it in the night of Shiba-Chaturdashi, it is put in a pot containing coins for distribution to Sadhus. With the coins the fruit is given away, the giver not knowing to whom. It secures good luck to its owner and fulfills all his desires. The writer has got one, but unfortunately, he has good many wants yet unfulfilled.

to see the man. The appearance of the man was so very prepossessing that the king no sooner saw him than prostrated himself at his feet. The ascetic opened his eyes and asked the king what he wanted. The king stammered : " Father ! would you deign to accept my daughter's hand ? I wish to give her away to a *Sadhu*."

The man bent down his head and kept silent for a few minutes and then replied : " Sire ! pardon my life. I am no other than your Majesty's humble barber. My vile ambition to secure the fair princess's hand led me to wear this false garb. But now as better sense has dawned upon me, I sincerely regret and repent for what I did. I see that by merely shamming a *Sadhu* I have been able to bring a mighty monarch down on his knees before me, but had I been a real one what more could I have done ? I leave my wife and children to your Majesty's care and start on the journey of life to which I have hitherto been a pretender only." So saying the barber disappeared and was heard of no more.

The king and the minister returned to the capital sadder but wiser.

XXXV. THE TWO SOULS.

THE continuance of peace or disquietude of the soul of a father after death, is considered by the Hindus, to depend much upon his son's action in this world. The following story is an illustration.

One day while Devarshi Narad was taking a view of heaven and hell, a strange sight met his eyes : A soul in Paradise being in enjoyment of all sorts of divine comforts was bewailing bitterly, while another in hell though plunged into its awful abyss was very jubilant. Narad, failing to reconcile the reasons, went straight off to Srikrishna and prayed to be enlightened on the point. The all-knowing God smiled and replied : "Narad ! it is better that thou shalt see the reasons with thy own eyes than hear them from my lips. Come let us descend on earth." So saying they left *Golakdham* (abode of the Most High).

It was the morning of a *Dwadashi** Shrikrishna and Narad went to a big mansion in a

* Twelveth lunar day.

city and asked the gate-keeper to inform his master that two *Brahmans* waited at his door and wanted to break their fast observed on the occasion of *Ekaadashi* * of the previous day. The gate-man left with the mission and returned after a few minutes, only to tell them that his master could not receive such uninvited guests. Srikrishna gave a precious jewel to the man and calmly said : "Here is my *Ashis* (blessing-gift) for your master, make it over to him in my name, please." So saying he went away with Narad.

Leaving the city they repaired to a forest. There they went to the hut of a recluse who received them with all the respect due to their rank. He washed their feet with his own hands, and spreading a *Kushasan* (mat of *Kush* grass) for them to sit upon, went out to gather esculent roots and fruits in the forest for their entertainment. He soon returned with a basketful of such viands, milked his *Kamdhenu* and fed his guests with the simple repast. When the guests went to rest after the meal, he left again to collect his own food. No sooner

* Eleventh lunar day. A pious Hindu is to fast for the day and night on the occasion,

† A cow that gives milk at any time required.

had he gone out than Shrikrishna told Narad to get up quickly. He then set fire to the host's hut and ran away with the cow, Narad following him mechanically. When at a safe distance, Narad halted and giving vent to his the theretopent up feelings addressed Shrikrishna thus : "Lord ! thy actions are too mysterious. The wealthy man who turned us out, has for his reward a jewel, but as to the hospitable recluse who treated us so kindly, thou didst not hesitate for a moment to reduce his hut to ashes and to rob him of his pet cow. Is this thy way of administering justice ? "

Shrikrishna smiled and replied : "Narad ! I do nothing without a reason. The man who refused us shelter is the son of the unhappy soul in Paradise. His stay there by merit of his own virtue has come to an end and there being no good action on his son's part to prolong his father's days in heaven he expects his downfall every moment, and hence you saw him lamenting. I gave the jewel to the son simply to teach him that sheltering travellers might sometimes turn to his own advantage. Henceforth he will think twice before denying shelter to persons who would seek it at his house. The ascetic in the

wilderness is the son of the happy soul in hell who having almost served out the period of his punishment brought upon himself by his own action, was every moment expecting his elevation to heaven by the aid of his son's virtue, hence you saw him happy even in hell. But what delayed his transfer to Paradise was his son's excessive attachment for the cow and the hut and so I took away both these obstacles. Now the son will be a whole-hearted devotee to the Almighty and thus expedite his father's installation in heaven. Narad was quite satisfied with the explanation and bowed to Shri-krishna. Then they both ascended up to heaven and found that the unhappy soul in Paradise had changed his place with that of the happy one in hell.

XXXVI. THE BRAHMAN AND HIS PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

ONCE upon a time there lived a very poor Brahman in the holy city of Brindaban. Having got no succour from men, he repaired to a secluded recess of the Vindhya-chal range to move, by prayers, the gods to his aid. His fervent prayer shook Brahma's *Asan* (seat), and he appeared unto him and said : "Thou seekest wealth, and wealth thou shalt have. Go to Rup Goswami and he will give it to thee." So saying he vanished.

The Brahman with great joy went to Rup and found him in deep meditation in his leafy hut in an adjoining forest. When he opened his eyes the Brahman kissed his feet and stood with folded hands. Rup looked up at his face and said : "Oh ! I know thy mission, take this stone and be off. It turns iron into gold by its mere touch." Saying this he placed a pebble in his hand and again closed his eyes in meditation.

The Brahman was as pleased as one would

be to get the moon in his hand. Carefully securing the stone in his cloth, he set out for home, eager to meet his better-half and to communicate to her their good luck. Curious to test the merit of the stone he searched for a piece of iron and no sooner did he get it than he touched it with the stone, and to his utter amazement the iron was transformed into pure gold. His joy knew no bounds and he went on his way pondering over several speculations and building castles in the air. Suddenly a thought flashed into his mind and it was this : " Why did Gosainji part with such a precious stone as, if it were, a *Káná Kauri** to him ? Has he got more like it, or does he not care for it ? " The thought weighed heavily on his mind and he returned to Rup and questioned him. The ascetic smiled and replied : " My boy ! the stone though of immense value to you is of no use to me, as I possess a treasure infinitely superior to thousands of such trifles."

* *Kauris* or Shell-money are small sea-shells and were very much current in India in days gone by. Their use is still retained amongst the poor as about 100 of them are to be had in exchange for one pice, but the *Káná* or blind i. e. a cracked *Kauri* is always rejected as useless *Káná Kauri* means a most trifling thing.

The Brahman astounded, asked : " Pray, where is that treasure, sir ! can I not have a look into it ? "

Rup.—Yes, if you prove yourself deserving.

Brahman.—How do you want to test me ?

Rup.—Can you throw the stone into this river without remorse ? Mind, I can look into your heart.

Brahman.—Yes, of course, I can.

So saying he forthwith flung the stone into the blue water of the limpid Jamuna that gurgled close by the ascetic's *Ashram* (abode).

Rup found the Brahman fit to be his disciple and initiated him in the art of *Yog* (to be in one with the Supreme Being). In due course of time when he became an adept in the art he found out that the inestimable treasure spoken of by Rup, existed within himself and between his two physical eyes. The great glory and grandeur he saw in it surpass all description. A *Yogi* can see it, but cannot describe it.

The news of the throwing of the touch-stone into the Jamuna having reached the Emperor of Delhi, he sent many elephants to drag the

the water to recover it. The tusk-ers did their best, but failed to get it out of the water, though their iron shackles turned to gold, having come in contact with the stone.

XXXVII. "MERA RAM NIKAL GAYA ? !"

(Has my Ram gone out of me ? !)

THERE once lived a queen in India, who was very pious and God-fearing, but to her great misfortune, her husband was never heard to utter the name of God. She, however, dared not ask him the reason, and passed her days in sadness and sorrow. One night while the couple were fast asleep on the couch, the queen suddenly awoke and heard her husband exclaiming "Ram," "Ram." Her joy knew no bounds. Next morning she rose betimes and ordered the Dewan to distribute alms to the poor in celebration of the happy event.

The king, as usual, came to the Durbar-Hall in the morning, and seeing a large gathering in the courtyard asked the minister the reason. The minister bowed and replied : "Sire ! as her Majesty, the queen, heard you uttering "Ram," "Ram " last night, an event which never happened before during her married life, she has been highly delighted, and by way of devout thanks-giving to God Almighty, has

ordered alms to be distributed to the poor ; hence the crowd." The king after a momentary pause mournfully muttered : " Ah ! then *Mera Ram Nikal Gaya ?*" and fell a lifeless corpse on the spot. The bereaved queen mounted the funeral pile with her husband and suffered herself to be burnt alive as a *Sati* in the hope of meeting her lord in the next world.

A man's heart is the only organ of true worship, words are mere its vibrations. A real devotee during divine service loses himself in the enjoyment of the sweet inner music of his heart and carefully avoids words as disquietening disturbance.

XXXVIII. BHUTER BAPER SHRADDHA.

A large mango grove, at the outskirts of the district of Burdwan, was once the favourite abode of the ghosts of that locality. There lived in it altogether one thousand and one ghosts. They once took it into their heads to perform the *Shraddha* ceremony of their departed fathers ; so a meeting was held and the programme of the affair was settled. As the fathers of the ghosts had died on several different *Tithis* (lunar days) one Krishna Ekadashi (eleventh day of the waning moon) was fixed as the common date for all the *Shraddhas*.

With great enthusiasm the ghosts set themselves to work. They ran in all directions to collect the necessary articles of food and furniture, and in a short time huge heaps of rice, *Dal* (pulse), flour, *Ghi* (clarified butter), sugar etc. were stored up. The Brahmins and Pandits of Kashi, Kanchi, Drabir and the like places were invited with strict injunctions not to fail attending the ceremony, if they cared to keep their heads in their proper position ; the

favourite fashion of inflicting punishments by the Indian ghosts being to twist the head of a culprit. A big pavillion was erected in the *maidan* close to the mango grove, and all arrangements were completed to their satisfaction.

Now the day fixed for the ceremony arrived. Huge hillocks of boiled rice, *Luchis*, sweetmeats, large tankfuls of milk, and *Payash*, *Ghi* etc. were carefully stored for the entertainment of the numerous guests ; these being, of course, done by unseen hands. Those invited all assembled, as none ventured to be absent. To attend a ceremony of ghosts and to partake of food at their hands was an outrage upon the religious feelings of the guests. But to keep their heads safe on their shoulders they had no other choice left. The mortified leaders held a solemn conclave in whispers to adopt a means, if any could be found, to get out of the difficulty. After a due deliberation over the matter a plan emanated from the fruitful brain of an ancient Nyayalankar (Professor of Logic) which was readily accepted by all.

Just at the commencement of the *Shraddha* the priest thus addressed the shades : " Oh !

Ye unseen spirits, the time has arrived for the ceremony, tell me the name of your chief that we may make the *Sankalpa* and begin the work."

No sooner was this uttered than several shrill nasal voices* from above at once shouted out: "I am the chief," "I am the chief," and with it arose a terrific struggle and confusion which shook all the elements of the place and its neighbourhood. There was an awful crash in the air, a high tornado arose, and all the articles of food and drink were blown clean away. The guests now availed themselves of the opportunity to make good their escape as quick as they could, leaving their hosts to determine the question of chieftainship. Thus ended the *Shraddha* of the fathers of the ghosts, giving origin to the adage, "*Bhuter Baper Shraddha*."

* Indian ghosts generally speak through their noses.

XXXIX. A ROBBER OUTWITTED.

ON a dark wintry night a burglar worked his way into a barber's hut. The barber, being of a fraternity proverbially cunning, had got scent of it beforehand and feigned deep sleep and snored. The robber knew well where the barber kept his jars full of fine rice. So on entering the hut, he spread his winter sheet on the floor and began quickly to empty the contents of the jars upon it. No sooner the wily barber saw this than quietly got up from his bed and gently removed the cloth and went to bed again. The burglar went on emptying as many jars as he thought his *orna* could hold. Then in order to tie up the rice in the sheet he searched for its four corners. But to his extreme surprise they were not to be found. He pushed his arm up to the elbow right through the heap of rice, but yet there was no trace of them. He scattered the whole heap over the floor and searched for the sheet, as if it were a needle in a bottle of hay, but to no effect. Then it struck him that the occupier

of the hut might have awakened and played a trick. He struck the match he had with him, went to the barber and said ; " Sir ! I have been well paid in my own coins for my impudence. Forgive me and call me an ass if you find me again within the precincts of your house. Be kind enough to give me back my *orna*, I am shivering with cold. I promise that neither myself nor any of my comrades will ever step into your house again.

The barber from under his quilt answered calmly : " Not till you have placed the rice back where it was."

The burglar had no other alternative than to comply. So he put the whole quantity of the rice back into the jars. After which an *orna* was given to him and taking it he hastily ran away. But on his way home when putting it on, he found out to his utter chagrin that the cunning barber had given him an old cloth in tatters in lieu of his new one. He threw it away and went home foaming and frothing in rage only to be treated by his wife to a hearty scolding for his unsuccessful adventure of the night.

XL. NAWAB SERAJUDDAULA AND THE SWEEPER.

ONE day while Nawab Serajuddaula, the Governor of Suba Bangala, was about to sit down to his dinner, two sparrows flew fighting into the hall. They fell upon his dish and spoiled it. The Nawab was very much annoyed and sought in vain to find a man upon whom to wreak his wrath, although the cause of it was an accident pure and simple. But as some one must be punished, he tried to call to his mind the man whose unfortunate face he had first seen that morning, for that face, it is said, determines the good or evil character of the day for a person. After a few minutes he fixed upon a sweeper. Leaving his dinner he went straight off to the Darbar Hall and ordered the immediate arrest and execution of the poor man. Having thus worked off his anger he went back to take his meal.

Early next morning the poor sweeper, without having been informed of his offence or having been heard in defence, was condemned

and led to the scaffold. When everything was ready for his execution he was asked, according to the custom of the time, to express his last wish. The man wanted to have an interview with the Nawab. Serajuddaula having been informed of this came over to the place and asked the man what he wanted of him. The convict respectfully replied: "*Garib parawar!* your slave is not aware of the offence for which he is going to be beheaded." "It is a grave one," vociferated the Nawab, "for my having first seen your face last morning, I had my dinner spoiled." "If that were my offence, *Bande-newaz!*" murmured the man, "for which I am to lose my head, I humbly beg to submit, that I as well first saw this morning the face of your Excellency, in consequence of which my life is going to be taken, which, truly, is a far more precious thing than a dinner. Your Excellency is, therefore, the best judge to decide as to which of the faces should be worse condemned."

The Nawab became ashamed and forthwith ordered the release of the man.

XLI. THE GODDESS BHIMA.

ONCE upon a time a young prince of the ancient Tamradhwaja Dynasty of Tamralipta* fell dangerously ill. The best physicians were brought in, and after a month's careful treatment the boy came to the way to recovery. To effect a speedy cure the physicians prescribed for him broth of *Shôl* spawn to be taken daily for a year. As it was very difficult to procure the spawn of *shôl* all the year round, the king sent for the principal fisherman and ordered him to bring the daily supply of the fish on pain of death. The fisherman bowed and went away in great anxiety.

It being the beginning of the rains the fisherman found no difficulty for the first two or three months. But the rains having ceased he began to experience great trouble in keeping it up. One day he could, by no means, procure the spawn and to save his life he fled from home and concealed himself in the forest which then flourished on the site where the temple of

* The modern Tamruk in the District of Midnapur, Bengal.

Goddess Bhima now stands. While in this position, he suddenly heard a rustling sound behind him and turning he beheld to his utter wonderment an old woman quietly approaching him. A shiver ran through his whole body, and he thought himself, possibly in presence of a spirit. But to his infinite relief and joy the old lady spoke with a smile and said : "My boy ! why dost thou look downcast, what ails thee ?" The trembling fisherman took courage and replied, "*Mô* ! our king wants me to supply him daily with living spawns of *Shôl* for a year on pain of death. This I did so long as I could, but now as the rains are over and the spawns are not to be had anywhere, I failed in my supply and have come to conceal myself here to save my life. The lady with a pitiful look said ; "Oh ! I see thy difficulty. Come with me and I will help thee." The fisherman silently followed the lady. On reaching the bank of a *kundu* in the forest she showed him numerous spawns in its waters and told him to take home as many basketfuls of them as he required and to smoke and preserve them for his future supply. She blessed him and said that the smoked spawns would be alive as soon

as they should be soaked in the waters of the *kundu*. She then melted away in the air. The fisherman stood stupified. He, however, took home a good lot of the spawns and smoked and preserved them. His surprise knew no bounds as he found the spawns actually become alive when put into the *kundu* waters, and thenceforward he found it easy to keep up his supply of fresh spawns.

One day it struck the king as to how the fisherman could secure the spawns every day out of season. The next day when the fisherman came, he asked him about this. The man bowed and told him all. The king could not believe him and wishing to see things for himself, went with him.

The fisherman got some smoked spawns from home and no sooner did he put them into the *kundu* waters than they became alive and began to move. The astonished king stood speechless. But he had not long to remain thus, for the next moment the same old lady appeared unto him in all the brilliancy of her divine form and said: "Thou hast oppressed the poor fisherman, and as an atonement for thy crime thou must build a temple over this

kundu and place my image in it for thy worship and name it Bhima Debi. See to the daily worship of it, or neglect it at thy peril." So saying the goddess disappeared, for she was no other than the Divine spirit in one of its manifestations—the Mahashakti or the Great Primordial Force.

Shortly after this the king erected a temple over the *kundu* and enshrined it with the present image and endowed large properties for the daily worship of the idol. It is believed the *kundu* still exists beneath the pedestal of the goddess's seat.

XLII. THE PANDIT AND HIS CHILD.

PANDIT Gajapati Tarkaratna of Navadvip, though poor, had, according to the custom of the time, a *Tol* in his house, in which boys of his caste were taught and fed free. One of the students of the *Tol* was his own son Gajaraj. Though he carefully prepared his daily lessons and stood well in tests, yet his father would often chastise and reprimand him. Master Gajaraj patiently bore the treatment for a length of time, but at last his anger got the better of him, and he was determined to get rid of his father. With this purpose in view, one night, he stealthily approached his father's bed-room with a sharp scimitar in hand, and waited by the side of the entrance door ready to give him the fatal blow at the first opportunity.

While in this position, he heard the following conversation between his parents in the room. The mother having seen the serene effulgence of autumnal full-moon streaming

into the room through the opening of the old thatch thus addressed her husband: "Dear," look, look, how fine shines the moon to-night!"

The father:—Yes, my love. But have we not got a finer one in the house?

The mother:—What do you mean?

The father:—Why? Our dear Gajaraj shines far better in the *Töl*.

The mother with some surprise:—Oh! then you like him. But why do you chastise him so often?

The father:—You women generally judge things superficially. Don't you know the adage: "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Boys require a bit of stirring up now and then. Flatter them and they are spoiled.

The wife now understood what her husband meant by his chidings. Master Gajaraj who was attentively listening to the conversation was greatly astonished to find that his father held such a high opinion of him. He hastened into the room, fell at his feet and opened his mind with extreme repentance. The loving father fondly embraced and pardoned him. The boy,

in time, became one of the distinguished Pandits of the day, and the father lived to see it.

XLIII. HOSPITALITY.

IN days of yore there lived an invalid Brahman in Bengal. As his case was pronounced incurable, he left home for some remote forest to invoke divine aid in its silent depth. When he reached the wilderness it was evening and the wild beasts were out for prey. He became extremely terrified and anxiously sought for a shelter to pass the night. On he hastened his speed and espied a light at some distance. He ran towards it and shortly found himself in the hut of a falconer who received him warmly and entertained him with a simple repast of wild fruits and roots. The hut being too small for all of them to sleep in, only the Brahman's bedding was spread in it. The host and his wife, with bows and arrows ready, guarded the door. They knew well the awful risk they undertook in so doing, as the ferocious man-eaters were roaming and roaring very near to their habitation watching only for an opportunity to make a meal of them. But to secure

the safety of their guest was their sole object that night and they did not mind their own dangers.

The Brahman went to bed, and as he was fatigued, he soon fell asleep. But he had not slept long when he awoke, and to his horror saw the hospitable couple on the jaws of two gigantic tigers. In the twinkling of an eye the beasts cleared out of sight, plunging into the deep forest with the dangling bodies of the unfortunate victims. The Brahman stood trembling. He wept bitterly believing himself to be the cause of their death. After passing, however, the rest of the night in the hut, he left it early next morning.

The sad experience at the very outset of his sojourn shook the Brahman's determination of further stay in the forest and compelled him to take his way back. He started for home. While returning, it so happened, that he had to pass a night in an ancient temple of the God Shiva at the outskirts of a forest. During the night his malady grew worse and the excruciating pain made him roll on the temple floor like a butchered goat and shriek in agony. The all-merciful Shiva at last pitied the man and said : "Thy trial is over,

thou hast undergone the punishment of thy sins. Now hark unto me and do what I say and thou shalt be quite hale and hearty again. The king of thy country is childless, give him the trefoil I am worshipped with, and his queen wearing it in a gold amulet will soon be blessed with a child fair as the moon. But for thy own benefit thou must be present in the lying-in-room at the moment the baby is born and ask it to bestow upon thee, the merit of its one day's hospitality, and if thou succeedest thou shalt for ever get rid of thy illness." With great delight the Brahman bowed to the God, and early in the morning left the temple with a *bel* leaf well secured.

Straightway he went to the king, as a Brahman in those days, had free access to Royalty and even to the Zenana-ladies. He informed the king of the divine mission and gave him the trefoil which he gladly accepted and also agreed to his admission into the lying-in-room during child-birth. The Brahman then left for home, promising to return in due time.

The trefoil was worn by the queen, and in due course of time she conceived. A few days previous to the delivery of the child

the Brahman came and lodged in the Palace. The child-birth drew near, and one night the queen's labour-pain actually began, and the Brahman was called in. He entered the room and anxiously awaited the arrival of the babe. He had not to wait long. The child presented itself shortly ; but no sooner, did it see the light than it looked at the Brahman and exclaimed : "Hallo Brahman ! we meet again ! what do you want of me this time ?" The Brahman was struck dumb and stood stupified not knowing what to say in reply. At last he stammered, "We meet again and what I want of you this time, is indeed a riddle to me. You are just out of your mother's womb, but put me questions like an old acquaintance."

"Such I am indeed ;" replied the babe, "do you not recollect once passing a night in a falconer's hut, and of your host and his wife falling victims to tigers on your account ? I was that man in my last birth, and for the virtue of the hospitality I accorded to you that night, I have been born an heir to a royal throne. My wife, as well, will shortly be born claiming her parentage in a royal family and we

will again be united in marriage. Now what is your mission ? ”

The Brahman's amazement knew no bounds. He remained speechless for a few minutes and then replied, “ I want the gift of your merit of one day's hospitality in order to be cured of my ailment.” The child mused a little and then replied : “ I give it to you,” and immediately sank into the natural oblivion of a new born babe.

The Brahman was perfectly cured of his illness then and there and returned home with a happy heart. He became exceedingly hospitable since them, and lived for years begetting many sons and daughters.

XLIV. HOPE.

A certain maniac once took a fancy to have an interview with God, and with this purpose in view, he left home and began to wander about wherever his eyes led him. One day, while passing through a wilderness, he met a recluse in meditation under a big tamarind tree, who suddenly opened his eyes and addressed him : “ Brother, where are you going ? ” “ To see my God,” replied the man gravely. The recluse took the man to be off his head, but requested him to ask his God, how many years more he would have to pray in order to be blessed with His visit. The man agreed and went away. A few minutes after, he met another ascetic in devotion under a mango tree, who also requested him to obtain the same information about himself. The man consented and proceeded on to his journey.

The maniac being in right earnest to see his God travelled day and night quite unmindful of the trouble and fatigue of the journey. The all-merciful God was moved, and he

appeared unto him and said : " Oh my' boy ! I am God *Almighty* thou seekest for. What wantest thou of me." By the brilliant halo that encircled the dazzling form of the sacred Being he felt that he was in presence of the divinity. He bowed his head with all the reverence that his fancy could conceive and exclaimed : " Dev ! I have nothing particular to beg of Thee. I simply wish to feast my soul with the nectar of Thy divine grace." " Dost thou wish to go to Paradise ? " demanded God. The divine grace had illumined the man's mind, and he replied : " Father Almighty ! even the bliss of Paradise is not eternal, make me a servant of Thine and for ever. But for the present Thou must let me know when wouldst Thou visit the two ascetics I met on my way here." The kind God gave his reply, and vanished.

The man took his way back. When he came to the ascetic under the mango tree he stopped and said : " Brother, you shall have to continue your prayer for as many years more as there are leaves on this tree under which you sit." The recluse mournfully exclaimed : " Could you see God and did He say so Him-

self ? " Yes, of course," replied the half-witted fellow, " or who else could give me the information ? " He then gave such a vivid description of the Divine Being that it quite convinced the ascetic that the man actually had an interview with God Himself. The recluse then murmured in melancholy despair : " Oh ! then I shall have to continue my worship for many many years more ; that is impossible." So saying he gave up meditation and went away in despair.

The maniac then went to the other ascetic under the tamarind tree and asked him to pray for as many years more as there were leaves on the tamarind tree, if he would care to have an interview with his God. Though the tiny leaves of the tamarind tree were infinite times greater in number than those of the mango tree, the devotee did not flinch an inch from his undertaking. The hope that he would see God some day animated his soul and he again closed his eyes in meditation. But no sooner was this done than God Almighty revealed Himself unto him and took him and the maniac with Him and disappeared in the clouds.

XLV. THE WEAVER AND HIS MILCH-COW.

A poor weaver had a pretty milch-cow that gave ten seers of milk daily. The weaver, his wife, and their children drank and ate the sweet milk and its various preparations to their hearts' content, and even distributed them to their neighbours.

The old father of the weaver happened to die when the cow was in full milk. Poor as the weaver was, he wanted to utilize the milk on the occasion of his father's *Sradha*, and thus to save an item of expenditure. The weaver's wife and the children, of course, liked not the economy. But there was no help for it. They must put off the dainty delicacies for a few days. To have two maunds of milk on the day of the *Sradha*, the milking was stopped from eight days previous to the occasion. All other arrangements were duly got ready.

On the day of the *Sradha* the weaver, with great expectation, went to milk his cow, of the accumulated quantity taking a big vessel

with him. But lo ! to his utter chagrin, he found not a drop of milk. The daily milking having been suspended so long, the animal had assimilated the fluid. The weaver bathed the udder with water again and again and pressed the teats of the animal with all his force, but instead of giving milk the cow only urinated. The foolish weaver had to purchase milk from the Bazar paying about double the ordinary price at that late hour.

XLVI. PLUTO DETHRONED.

THE dear daughter of Yam-Raj once took it into her head to see a living man, and said to her father : “ Papa dear ! I have never seen a man in flesh and blood, would you kindly satisfy my curiosity.” As Yam never denied her any thing, he ordered his *Duts* to bring up a man alive at once. The messengers bowed and hastened on the errand.

Here in the district of Hughli lived a *Gomasta* called Chokaram Biswas. One evening, after collecting rent, he was coming home alone. When he reached a dreary cremation ground which lay by the side of a river, it had grown quite dark. There appeared on the western horizon a cloud not bigger than a man’s hand at first, which soon covered the whole sky. It began then to blow hard, lightnings flashed fast, and loud peals of thunder rent the air and shook the ground. Then down came the rain in torrents. The poor *Patwari* with the *daftar* under his arm, and the old umbrella on his shoulder began to run with all his might, to reach his destination. But

the heavy rain and the furious wind appeared, as if determined, to prevent his further advance, and he was obliged to take shelter under an ancient *Bat* tree that stood on the river bank. Seeing no sign of abatement of the elementary warfare, he took up a funeral *cot* that lay close by and placing it in a hollow of the tree, measured it with his length, and fell asleep.

The Yam-Duts were roaming all over the country to secure a living man, but to no purpose. Now one of them espied the Patwari from above, and they all came down to the spot. From the place and the position in which the man lay, they, at first, took him for dead, but on close inspection, found to their delight, that he was living. The four *Duts* instantly lifted up the *cot* on their shoulders and rose up in the air, piercing through the clouds. But they had not advanced far when the *Patwari* awoke and realized his position. From the description he had heard, while a child, of the messengers of *Yam*, he had no difficulty in ascertaining as to who his carriers were. He quaked with horror in every limb, his flesh crept and he was very near to fainting. However he gradually took courage, but seeing no means

of escape he was obliged to resign himself to his ambulance. The *Yam-Duts* rose coursing up and up still fast through space, and after a few hours journey the *Gomasta* was safely landed on the court-yard of Pluto's palace.

It so happened, that at the time when the *Patwari* was brought in, *Yam Raj* had gone to take his bath, and his throne remained empty. The *Patwari* had heard his grandmother say that if one could reach *Yam's* throne when unoccupied no power could eject him out of it. He, therefore, now found an opportunity to put the saying to test. Availing himself of the vacancy the wily *Gomasta* quickly leapt out of his cot and seized hold of the throne, and seated himself upon it. No sooner was this done than myriads of messengers flocked round him and waited for orders. The immediate seizure of Pluto was the first command. This was carried out and the king of hell was brought in and secured to a pillar. The *Patwari* then ordered the removal of Pluto's treasure to his house and it was instantly obeyed. For all this high-handedness *Yam Raj* raved in fearful fury, but he was helpless.

The shrewed *Gomasta*, at last, sent for

Chitra Gupta—the keeper of vital statistics of the earth—with all his papers, and asked him to produce the record relating to his case. It being laid before him he saw that he would die after a couple of years. He ordered the entry to be altered thus: “Chokaram Bishwas of Suvarnagram, Hughly, will die to-morrow.” Chitra Gupta did as he was bid. After this the hero of our tale returned home triumphant.

No sooner was *Yam Raj* set free than he sent for the record relating to Chokaram, and was glad to find that the man was to come under his jurisdiction the very next day. As soon as the day dawned, he called Chitra Gupta, and ordered him to inform him as soon as Chokaram Bishwas should be due, purposing evidently to consign him to the worst hell. The Record-keeper, however, showed that the official alteration as to “Chokaram Bishwas of Subarnagram, Hughly will die to-morrow,” bore no date. So it was impossible to ascertain when the to-morrow would come. Seeing he had thus been tricked out of his purpose, *Yam Raj* was obliged to keep silent and Chokaram had to be allowed to live an immortal life. They say he still lives but nobody knows where.

XLVII. THE PADRI AND THE TWO CHEATS.

It was a Sunday afternoon in the hot month of March. The scorching Indian sun though far down the zenith, yet looked a huge blazing furnace in the sky. A good old Padri Sahib, charitable to a fault, at this unseasonable hour of the day, was out riding to a distant village to distribute alms to the poor, as was his wont on that day of the week. When he reached the centre of a meadow, two Mahomedan brothers who were coming from the opposite direction espied him, and as they knew well how freely and lavishly he gave away his wealth when the right chord of appeal was touched, they made a plan to cheat some money out of him.

The elder brother was called Bare Mian, and the younger Subhan Alla. The latter instantly stretched himself on the ground under a tree, and covered his body from head to foot with his *Chadur*, and Bare Mian went weeping to the Clergyman and said : “ Khoda-wand ! we were coming to the town, on the

way my younger brother had a fit of heat apoplexy, and he fell down dead under yonder tree ; I have no money to meet the expenses of his cremation, and I am a stranger to this part of the country." The kind Clergyman felt deeply. He remained silent for a few minutes, and a big tear drop rolled down his cheek. He then drew out his purse from his pocket, and made over the whole of its contents—Rupees Twenty—to the man, soothed him with soft words, and rode back to his bungalow.

Having got a gift beyond his expectation, with great alacrity Bare Mian hastened back to meet his brother ; coming near him, he told him to get up and look at the day's gains. But he got no reply—thinking him asleep he pulled off the covering sheet from his body. But good God ! what met his eyes ! His brother was a cold corpse. Without waiting there to mourn his death, he forthwith ran to the Padri, fell at his feet, and told him all. The Reverend elder heaved a deep sigh and said that it was the fruit of his own action and that there was no help for it, and to use the money now for an actual cremation.

XLVIII. THE TEMPLE OF BAIDYANATH.

THE chivalrous of Ravan, the monster king of Lanka (Ceylon), was a terror not only to the then Rulers of India, but also to the gods of heaven, some of whom he made his vassals and employed in different capacities in his kingdom. Yam, the king of hell, had to serve as keeper of his stable ; the streets of Lanka were swept by Pavan, the god of the winds, and watered by Barun, the god of the rains, and Indra the sovereign of Heavens had to supply wreaths made of *Parijat* flowers daily from his celestial garden to Lankeshwar and his queen Mandodari.

Ravan was a devout worshipper of Mahadev, the God of gods. To perform his *Pujas* he had to go daily to Kailas the abode of the God on the summit of the Himalayas. Though he could do the journey easily in his aerial car, yet the daily travelling was one of trouble and time to him. One day, therefore, after performing his *Pujas* he asked the God to remove

his residence to Lanka. As the great God lived and moved in his divine consort Parvati, and could do nothing without her, he asked her opinion on the point. Parvati not consenting the proposal fell. But the demon king was a tough customer to deal with, he was not a being so easily to abandon the idea once taken into his head. He pressed Mahadev hard again and again. The God knew his devotee well, and to avoid unpleasantness devised a plan to outwit him and said : " My son ! as thou art eager to take me to thy capital I can agree to it on this condition that thou dost carry me on thy head direct to Lanka, without either breaking thy journey or putting me down on the way on any account." So saying the God became as heavy as the world. Ravan confident of his vast strength readily agreed, and uttering " Joy Mahadev " took him on his head and set out for his capital.

Female wits generally prevail where man's instinct fails. Parvati seeing her Lord baffled in his attempt thought of a plan and asked her maid Jaya to summon Barundev. On the Rain-god's arrival she whispered an instruction into his ear and retired. Here Ravan with the God

on his head was making his way fast towards Lanka. When he neared the hills of Devagriha—the modern Deoghar, he suddenly felt a call of nature to make water. But remembering his promise, he tried to suppress the motion, which, however, became more pressing every moment, and at last he felt he had no choice left but to yield. To pass water with the God on his head would surely be profane, and to put the God down would be a distinct breach of his contract. But the call of nature, at last, got the better of him and he placed the idol down and began to urinate. It was no common urinating. Barundev the god of the rains was presiding over his urinary bladder. So the process went on for hours together and the enormous discharge formed a rivulet which is still in existence and passes by the name, “Ravan Ganga” or the Ganges of Ravan.

After satisfying the call of nature made so undersirably profuse under the auspices of the god of the rains, Ravan got up and felt easy. He then after taking his bath went to take the God upon his head again. But lo ! the deity had suddenly rooted himself into the ground and with all his strength the mighty

monarch of Lanka could not lift him up an inch. Then in extreme rage and annoyance he struck a heavy blow with his fist on his head and went away. The depression caused by the blow can still be seen on the head of the transformed idol. For some years the idol remained in the *jungle* without any notice being taken of it.

Close to the forest, where lay the God transformed, there was a hamlet. One Baiju Gop lived in it and had lots of cattle. One day his pet milch-cow Payaswini that gave most milk suddenly ceased giving any whatever and Baiju was anxious. His suspicion fell upon the neatherd.

The next day Baiju followed the boy unperceived to the pasturage to watch him. The boy on reaching the meadow went under a shady tree, there spread his *gamchha* (bathing towel) and measured it with his length. The cattle went agrazing except Payashwini who entered the *jungle* and went straight off to the idol and stood right close to it and no sooner had her teats touched the idol than to the surprise of Baiju there was a spontaneous flow of milk bathing it all over. Baiju astonished drew

near and found that the figure was a real emblem of the God Mahadev. He built a temple over it and named it after his own name—Baijunath or Baidyanath—which has since become one of the famous places of pilgrimage of Hindus in India.

XLIX. ANNADAN.

(Giving away of rice.)

ONCE upon a time there lived a king and a queen, but nobody knows when and where. They were noted for their charity. The king's mode of giving away was quite different from that of the queen : The one delighted in distributing wealth to the poor, and the other's pleasure was in giving them food. Thus living a life of liberality for a long time the happy pair were gathered to their fathers.

By way of reward for their piety in this world, both of them went to Paradise, after death. There the king was assigned a splendid mansion of solid gold with all the environments of celestial comforts. Of gold and silver there lay heaps for his use. But one thing, however distressed him most, and it was the total absence of any thing to break his fast with, and he had starved ever since his accession to Paradise.

One day as Narayan came to see him, the king asked : " Lord ! I find plenty of riches

only for my use, but where are the articles of food and drink ? I am dying of hunger ever since I came here. Pray, what can be the reason of it ? ”

The God ‘smilingly’ replied : “ My son ! as thou hast sown so shalt thou reap. Thy charity consisted of metals only and metals thou shalt have hundred times what thou gavest away. But as thou didst not distribute any articles of food or drink, how canst thou expect to have them here ? ”

The king then sorrowfully asked : “ Dev ! what then must I do now ? ”

Narayan—“ There is one thing, however, with which thou canst appease thy hunger and thirst.”

King—“ Pray, what is it, Dev ! ”

Narayan—“ Suck the index-finger of thy right hand.”

The king did so, and to his utter wonderment instantly found his hunger and thirst vanished, and he asked the god the reason.”

“ My boy ! ” replied Narayan, “ while one day thou wert busy in distributing alms to beggars, a hungry Brahman came to thee and asked for food. Thou gavest him money, and

as to food thou showedst him the food-depôt of thy queen with thy index-finger. The man went there and was sumptuously fed by thy wife. For thy this trifling service to the man performed by the index-finger, this bit of thy limb now comes to help thee with food and drink for all time to come." Saying this the god vanished.

The king got a lesson and understood the great worth of (*Annadan*) feeding the hungry.

THE END.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS.

A.

Allah—Mahomedan name for God.

Andar Mahal—Inner apartment where ladies reside.

Annadan—Giving away of boiled-rice.

Asan—Seat.

Asram—Abode.

Asat—Dishonesty.

Ashis—Blessing gift.

B.

Badsha—(see Padsha) Mohomedan emperor.

Bandenewaz—(Lit Bande-slave nawaz-protector) Protector of the humble slave.

Badshazadi—Mahomedan Empress.

Baper—Of father.

Bata—Banyan tree, Indian Fig tree (Botanist's Ficus Indica.)

Bazar—Market.

Begum—Emperor's wife.

Bel—A tree and its fruits (*Craterpa Marmelos*).

Bhagavan—God.

Bhagirathi—The river Ganges; so called after the name of Bhagirath who, as the tradition goes, brought her down to earth from heaven.

Bhuter—Of ghosts.

Bidhata or Bidhata Purusha—The writer or adjudicator of destiny. (*Vide* foot note p. 133.)

Bigha—About one-third of an acre.

Brahmā—The Creator.

Brahmadaitya—The ghost spirit of a Brahman who dies unmarried.

Brahman—The highest of caste in India.

Brahmani—Wife of a Brahman.

C.

Champa—A tree and its flower.

Chandal—The lowest of caste in India.

Chilam—A smoking bowl.

D.

Dacoits—Plunderers.

Daftar—Records.

Dakshina—Remuneration.

Dal—Pulse.

Darbar—The hall where a king holds his Court.

Darwan—Gate-keeper.

Deb—God.

Delhishwaroba Jagadishwaroba—The emperor of Delhi or the emperor of whole world.

Dekchi—A vessel for cooking.

Devorshi—A Saint among the gods.

Dewan—Minister of Finance.

Dharma—Virtue.

Dharmaraj—King of hell.

Dhobin—Washer-woman.

Dhuni—A pile of fire kept up by religious mendicants.

Durga—A goddess of Hindu Pantheon (consort of Shiva).

Dwadashi—The twelfth lunar day.

E.

Ekadashi—The eleventh lunar day. *Vide* foot note p. 164.

F.

Fakir—A Mehomedan mendicant.

Falgun—One of the twelve Indian months falling between February and March.

G.

Gadi—Throne.

Gamchhu—A bathing towel, a constant companion of a Bengal peasant.

Garibparawar—Protector of the poor (Garib-poor, parwar-protector.)

Ghât—Landing or bathing place of a river or tank, generally furnished with flight of steps.

Ghi—Clarified butter.

Gobinda Dwadashi—An auspicious bathing occasion.

Godown—Store-house.

Golakdham—Abode of God.

Gomosta—Collector of rent and account-keeper.

H.

Hakim—Mahomadan physician.

Hara—Same as Mahadev or Shiva. The God of gods,

Harem—Seraglio.

Hastinapur—The Modern Delhi.

Howda—Wooden or silvern seat on the back of an elephant.

Hukka—Smoking apparatus.

J.

Jamadar—Head of the menial servants.

Jaymahadev—Glory be to Mahadev.

Jhola—Bag (made of cloth).

Jungle—Forest.

K.

Kahan—1280 units make one *kahan*.

Kali—A Goddess of the Hindu pantheon, consort of Shiva.

Kaliraj—Sovereign of Kaliyug.

Kaliyug—Iron age.

Karma—Actions.

Kavi—Poet.

Kotawal—Prefect of the police.

Khan—An appellation for a Pathan.

Kamdhenu—Cow that gives milk anytime but never calves.

Kayastha—Writer caste.

Kharga—Scimitar.

Khet—Field.

Khodawand—Incarnation of God Almighty.

Krisna Ekadashi—Eleventh lunar day of the waning moon.

Kundu—Well.

Kauri—Shell money. The currency is dying out now-a-days. (*Vide* foot note p. 168.)

Kanakauri—Kana-blind, Kauri-shell ; Blind shell *i. e.* broken shell and therefore useless. (*Vide* foot note p. 168.)

L.

Lac—Or laksha—One hundred thousand units.

Lakshmi—Goddess of fortune.

Lanka—Modern Ceylon.

Lankeswar—King of Lanka.

Lota—Water pot, generally made of brass.

Luchis—A sort of cakes made of flour boiled in ghi or clarified butter.

M.

Ma—Mother.

Mahadev—Same as God Shiva.

Mahasakti—The great primordial force of the Supreme Unconditioned Brahma.

Maidan—Meadow.

Manas Sarobar—(*Vide* foot-note p. 93.)

Masnad—Throne.

Memsahib—Wife of a European.

Mogal—One of the four sects of Mahomedans,—Shaikh, Sayed, Mogal, Pathan.

Mantri—Minister.

Mosahib—Courtier.

Muslem—Mahomedan.

Muchi—Shoemaker.

N.

Nabarutna—Nava-nine, ratna-jewel. Nine Jewels i. e. the nine great literary men of Bikramaditya's Court.

Nandi—An orderly of Mahadev.

Nautches—Dances.

Narapati—A King.

Narasundar—Nara-man, Sundar-good-looking. A barber by his shaving makes a man good looking, hence he is popularly called as such.

Narad—Saint among the gods.

Narayan—God Almighty.

Nat—Hero.

Nati—Heroine.

Nayalankar—A title to a Professor of Logic.

Nazar—Present.

O.

Orna—A wearing sheet.

P.

Padsha—Mahomedan Emperor (same as Badsha).

Pagri—Turban.

Panchugavya—The five varieties of cow's excrement—(1) cowdung (2) its urine (3) curd (4) milk and (5) clarified-butter.

Pandit—Literally a wise man but popularly a Sanskrit scholar.

Parvati—Consort of Shiva.

Parijat—A kind of celestial flower grown in the garden of
Indra the God of heaven. .

Pashuraj—Pashu-beast, raj-king ; the king of beasts-A Lion.

Pathan—One of the four sects of Mahamedans (see Mogul).

Putwari—Same as Gomasta, a rent-collector and keeper of accounts in a Zemidar's office.

Paysch—A pudding made of milk sugar and rice boiled together.

Prahar.—One eighth part of a day i. e. three hours.

Prayaschitya—Purification.

Prayer—Devotion.

Purohit—Priest.

Pushpnakaratha—Pushpa-flower, ratha-chariot. Flower-
 chariot.

Put—One of the hells in Hindu Mythology.

R.

Raja—King.

Rajput—Warrior Caste.

Raj-sara—King's Court.

Rakshasa—Demon ; literally raw-eater.

Ramayana—The great epic of Ram's life.

Rishi—Holy sage.

Rudra—A name of Mahadev.

Rudrakshaya—(Vide foot-note p. 160.)

Rupee—A silver coin equivalent to $1\frac{1}{2}$ shillings sterling.

S.

Sadhu—Saint.

Salams—Salutes.

Sankalpā—Desire for fruits from a religious ceremony.

Sannyasi—Religious devotee.

Sari—Mate of a Suka.

Sat—Honesty.

Sati—A woman who suffers herself to be burnt alive in her husband's funeral pile.

Shahib—A European (Lit. a gentleman.)

Shól—A kind of fish.

Shalgramshila—Stone Emblem of Narayan.

Shani—(Vide foot note p. 127.)

Shastra—Scriptures.

Shava—Court.

Shavapandit—Pandit of a king's Court.

Shiva—Same as Mahadev.

Shivadut—Messenger of Shiva.

Shivaloka—Shiva's plane ; abode of the virtuous.

Sloka—A verse.

Śraddha—A ceremony performed for the (Hindu) dead for the peace of their souls in heaven.

Śrīkrishna—A God in Hindu mythology.

Śrī Krisunji—The same as Śrīkrishna.

Suk—A fabulous bird resembling a parrot.

T.

Tumasha—Trickeries.

Teraī—Tract of land at the foot of a mountain.

Thakurbari—House for gods and goddesses.

Thags—An infamous set of plunderers and murderers.

Tithi—A lunar day.

Tol—Sanskrit school where students are taught and fed free.

Tribeni—Trijunction (of Gunga, Jumna and Sarasvati.) .

Tulsi—The sacred basil.

V.

Veranda—Balcony.

Vizir—Prime Minister of a Mahomedan Emperor.

Y.

Yamaduta—Messenger of Pluto.

Yamaraj—King of hell. The same as Dharmaraj.

Yôg—Union with the Supreme Being.

Yogi—One who practises Yoga.

Z.

Zenana—Inner apartment of a house, which the ladies occupy.

Zemindar—Holder of land, a landlord. Zemin-land, dar-holder.

SELECTED OPINIONS.

E. H. WALSH, Esq. c. s., *Commissioner of Burdwan Division* Writes :—"I have looked through the stories that you have collected and translated, and think that they form a very interesting contribution to the subject of Indian Folklore, the more so, as I gather from your preface that they have, none of them, appeared in print before."

J. H. KERR Esq., c. s., *Magistrate and Collector, Midnapur* Writes :—"The stories are interesting and well told and so far as I know, they are not accessible, in any other form, to English readers. If you have any more of them, I hope, you will bring out a second volume."

W. A. MARR Esq., c. s., *Magistrate and Collector 24-Parganas*, Writes :—"It is a most readable and interesting little book ; and I trust its sale will repay you for the labour you have bestowed on it."

THE HON'BLE R. W. CARLYLE, C. I. E., *Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal* Writes :—"Many thanks for your book, which I will have great pleasure in reading."

P. C. LYON Esq., c. s., *Commissioner of Patna Division* Writes :—"Many thanks for your sending me a copy of your book on Indian Folklore, which I shall read with much interest."

BABU KAILASH GOBINDA DAS, M. A., *Sub-Divisional Officer, Tamluk, Midnapur*, Writes :—"I have gone through it, and find it extremely interesting. It re-

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minds me of the stories I had heard in my childhood. It is pleasant reading throughout, and will no doubt be a great recreation to officers in their leisure hours. * * In one word your book is a good holiday companion. Please try to collect more stories, and bring out another part as soon as possible."

BABU SHIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH, *Sub-Divisional Officer, Lalbag, Murshudabad*, Writes :—"The stories are very interesting, the get-up does credit to the publishers, The children will like it very much. * * The facility with which you have handled a foreign language does great credit to you."

BABU SURENDRA NATH MAJUMDAR, *Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector' Champaran* Writes :—"It is a nice book nicely written, and I do not consider it, at all, inferior to Revd. Lal Bihari Dey's works. Hope it will command a large sale. There is a quaint humour pervading all through your stories which renders the style pleasant."

MISS LILIAN EDGAR M. A. F. T. S., Writes :—
* * * "I have found the tales very pleasant reading. * * *

SIR WILLIAM HUDSON, K. C. I. E., C. I. E., (*Ex. Lt. Colonel of the Bihar Light Horse*) from 31, Russell Street, Kensington, London, writes :—"I am much obliged for the copy of your Indian FOLKLORE, which is very pleasant and entertaining reading."

THE HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HOLMWOOD, *Judge, High Court, Calcutta*, writes :—"Very many thanks for your fascinating little book on FOLKLORE. I shall read it with much interest."

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H. LUSON Esq., c. s., *Commissioner, Chittagong Division*, writes :—"I am much obliged for the copy of your interesting collection of stories of Indian Folklore recently sent to me. I hope, you will be induced to continue your work in this direction, and to collect local stories of your neighbourhood, which have not been previously published. I believe there are many such."

E. G. DRAKE-BROCKMAN Esq. c. s. *District and Sessions Judge Midnapur*, writes :—" * * * * "I found some of the stories very amusing. I should suggest your making also a collection of local legends and stories and giving, as far as possible, a close translation, so that the local colouring and details might thereby be preserved."

H. E. ABBOT Esq., *Proprietor, the Indian Planters' Gazette*, writes :—" * * * * "I have safely received your very interesting brochure and read it with much pleasure."

THE HON'BLE T. K. GHOSH, B. A., *Inspector General of Registration, Bengal*, writes :—"The stories are suggestive and have been well rendered into simple and good English. The book enabled me to while away an hour when I was recently travelling by rail from Midnapur to Purulia."

H. E. RANSOM, Esq., c. s. *District and Sessions Judge Midnapur* writes :—"Many thanks for your interesting little book of Indian FOLKLORE which I have read with much interest."

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS :-

To all lovers of INDIAN FOLKLORE I cordially commend the little book under that title by Ram Satya Mukherjee, Sub-Registrar and Honorary Magistrate, Tanluk, Midnapore. There are no fewer than thirty-one well-told stories within the hundred and thirty pages, and the English is so easy that one is never reminded that the author is writing in (to him) a foreign language. The tales are all good and by no means devoid of humour. The plague story will appeal to many at the present time. Once when a terrific out-burst of plague took place, the king of Bharat, frightened out of his wits, summoned all the wise priests, and they advised the burning of incense and the offering of prayers as the only way of appeasing the wrath of the Almighty. The God Rudra heard, and his orderly Nandi had received instructions to guard the country against all evils. Nandi met the Monster, Plague, attempting to enter the Capital, and a terrible scuffle took place between the two giants. At last a bargain was struck. The Plague was to be allowed to stay one day in the City and take only one man as his victim. But fully one hundred died next day. Nandi grew furious and asked for an explanation. The Plague gave a hideous laugh and replied, "I did only take one man; the other ninety-nine died out of fear only." The book is sold at the modest price of one rupee and is printed and published by Sanyal and Co., 25, Roy Bagan Street, Calcutta—*Capital*, June 22nd, 1905.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

Many of our readers will remember Babu Rām Satya Mukharji, who used to reside in Mozufferpore. This highly gifted gentleman now Sub-Registrar of Assurances and Honorary Magistrate at Tamluk, in Midnapore, has always taken a keen interest in the legends and stories of this part of India, and gradually collecting a lot of them, has cleverly translated them into English and handed the collection to the public in the shape of a neat little volume, published by Messrs. Sanyal & Company, the Bharat Mihir Press, 25, Roy Bagan Street, Calcutta. INDIAN FOLKLORE is the title. Quaintly and prettily written the book has been well received by the Press, and Mr. Mukharji has also had most complimentary letters from leading civilians and other European gentlemen who have perused it.

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INDIAN FOLKLORE and kindred subjects are now of considerable interest to English readers, and encouraged by the kind approbation of the gentlemen whose notes on his compilation we extract, Babu R. S. Mukharji has resolved to enlarge considerably his collection of stories, and having been advised to entrust its publication to an English house of business, the public may look forward in the near future to a second edition of INDIAN FOLKLORE twice the size of the present one. But this will, of course, take time to bring out, so meanwhile we heartily commend the remaining volumes of the first edition to all lovers of legends, above all to mothers who can, if they are English reading Indians, retranslate them to their children, or if English ones read them to their little ones as written, for there is naught that is objectionable and everything that is quaint and amusing. It will be found a welcome gift to send to some relative,

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Being only a rupee it is within the limits of every one's pocket. Babu R. S. Mukharji's modest preface tells even more about his little *brochure*. *The Indian Planter's Gazette* March 11, 1905.

We have received an interesting little book called 'INDIAN FOLKLORE,' compiled by Ram Satya Mukharji, Sub-Registrar at Tamluk. It is a collection of tales which the author heard in his childhood, or which have been told him since, such tales as are used to amuse the children of this land. Most of them contain some moral, some teach the origin of a belief or practice, as, "THE Brahman and his idols," which shows how the Brahman came to look upon himself as a fit object of worship. "The Fate" is the story of a man pursued by fate under many guises. "With all your precautions you could not avoid your destiny," is whispered to him at the last. It is in striking contrast to the Christian idea. The book is well worth reading; it is bound attractively and well printed. The price is one rupee :—*The Indian Witness*, January 19, 1905.

INDIAN FOLKLORE BY RAM SATYA MUKHARJI—this book contains some interesting and amusing stories which give an insight into the ways of living and of thinking by the Indians. It is written in simple style. Boys reading in the lower classes will be able to easily follow the stories. In a troublesome journey one can very well beguile his time with this book.—*The Telegraph*, 24th May. 1905.

Babu Ram Satya Mukharji, a former resident of Mozaffarpore and now Sub-Registrar of Assurances and Honorary Magistrate at Tamluk, in Midnapore, has brought out a pretty little book entitled "INDIAN FOLKLORE." It is a collection of stories heard by Mr. Mukharji in his

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boyhood and since. The stories are interesting and well told, and most of them adorn a moral. The book is neatly printed and attractively bound. The price is rupee. 1.—*The Behar Times*, May 5th, 1905.

